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[AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.]

CHRISTINE'S REVENGE;

OR,

O'HARA'S WIFE.

CHAPTER XVI.

For misery is trodden down by many,
And being low, not relieved by any.

THE door opened, and Mademoiselle Mattelle entered, followed by the housekeeper, an Irish widow named Mrs. Kenney. She was a little, fat, smiling, dumpling of a woman, attired in black silk, and wearing a very showy cap on her head. Mrs. Kenney carried a tray with wine glasses, and a decanter filled with rich-coloured port, also some dainty sandwiches of chicken and tongue. Christine carried a lamp.

"We have resolved, dear child, Mrs. Kenney and I, not to allow anyone else to disturb you. We mean to wait on you ourselves. This is prime port, Mrs. Kenney tells me. All you want is this sweet mountain air and plenty of nourishment. Try to eat a little, my child."

"Bless my heart! how ill her ladyship looks," cried Mrs. Kenney, in alarm.

"Drink this wine, ma chère, at once," said Christine.

Lady Elaine swallowed the wine, but shook her head at the sandwiches.

"We must get her to rest," said Mrs. Kenney.

"Yes, there is a fire now burning brightly in your room, Lady Elaine," cried the governess.

"You had better come to bed, ma chère; the journey has been too much for you."

Lady Elaine arose and linked her arm in that of her governess.

Mrs. Kenney went on in front, carrying the lamp, and the three left the grand room and crossed the vast hall, pillared and paved like the nave of a cathedral, and then they mounted the magnificent staircase of black marble, with carved balustrades of polished oak, while upon them frowned or smiled or stared the dead and gone earls and countesses, and youths and maidens of the lordly race of Donnamore—all in the most costly frames, carved and richly gilt.

These family portraits, many of them from the hands of Sir Peter and Sir Joshua, were one of the boasts of the castle.

Donnamore, where was there a lordlier pile—more exquisite art treasures—more sombre and splendid and imposing chambers?

Lady Elaine herself, despite the love for her peasant husband, which was suddenly making such clamour in her heart, could not repress a feeling of elation when she looked at the likenesses of the lordly stock from which she sprung.

There was a picture of a certain Lady Jane of the last century, a fair young creature, of about the age Elaine was now: this little maiden wore white. A white gauze scarf was tied over her shoulders. She stood on the terrace of the castle, a black hound crouched at her feet; in her hand was a rich pink rose. Between this Lady Jane and Elaine there was a marked and strong likeness. The little beauty with the rose had married a foreign duke, and ruled archduchess in a foreign court. Elaine knew that

great things were intended for her by her countess mother. She was to marry the Earl of Carrig Flynn, she would have then an abbey in Scotland, a castle in Yorkshire, a great hall in Ireland, a lovely seat in North Devon, called Charterleigh Towers. She would have her town houses, the marquis was so rich. As she passed the smiling Lady Jane, she said to her, mentally:

"I wonder if you loved your archduke? No, I am sure you never did; then, in spite of all the diamonds you wore, you were not happy!"

Along a splendid corridor, and then into a chamber fit for a royal bride. This was the double chamber appointed for the Ladies Elaine and Clarice. It was furnished with sky blue hangings, chairs, and couches; the carpet was of a golden creamy ground, with bouquets of forget-me-nots and delicious ferns running over it.

Exquisitely toned and blended was every tint; there were little parian statuettes gleaming here and there about the room. Had it been day, Elaine would have seen that the balcony was crowded with flowers.

Elaine's bed—with gold footrail and blue silk curtains—stood in one recess, and one exactly like it, for Clarice, stood in another. The wardrobe for the young sisters was of rosewood, inlaid with mother of pearl.

"It is a charming room," cried Christine, with a half sigh. "Ah, ma chère, lie then on that couch; rest before you disrobe. Dear Mrs. Kenney may leave us. I will see you into bed."

Once left alone, Christine came and sat close to Elaine, who lay on the couch.

"What in the name of pity is the matter with

"your young ladyship?" she asked, scornfully. "Mademoiselle, I have seen him, my husband, and he tells me he hates me, that he will never claim me!"

Lady Elaine was frightened at the rage which Christine manifested. She flung away the girl's hand which she had been caressing, and she strode up and down the room like one mad. That Roland should come and claim his bride from her mother, the countess—claim her publicly, violently, had been the desire of her life for the last three months.

"And you," she said, turning round upon Elaine and almost gnashing her teeth. "What did you say? Did you whine pitifully, and say that you were best apart?"

"I did not speak. I could not——"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Christine, brutally. "Tell me no falsehoods. You did not choose to speak; you have not an atom of heart. I know what will happen—he will run reckless; he will join these Fenians; he will be taken prisoner, and he will be hanged. Ah! don't faint, you drive him to it; but I swear by all that's sacred, that if that happens, all the world—no, all the worlds—shall know it. Your mother's world first—all the tribe of heartless butterflies who dress and flaunt and dine and drive, and give entertainments and set fashions and scandalise and crush all their milliners and governesses and tutors. Ah! the elite shall know it, and the male politicians who make the laws, and the young men who drive four in hand and lose or win two thousand pounds in a night without the quiver of an eyelid—all that world shall know it. And the next world—the professional men, the lawyers, and the clergy and their wives—they shall all read it in the papers, for I will pay all I possess and have saved to publish your marriage to the English men and women of your generation; the tradespeople, the servants, the lower classes, the middle classes—all shall read the story in the 'Daily Telegraph,' 'Lloyds,' or the 'Dispatch.' In the 'Police News' there shall be a picture which I will execute on a block and send in free of charge. It shall be your sitting-room in the inn parlour at Hetty Heath, and your handsome husband seated in an arm-chair, and yourself kneeling on the rug before the fire to warm your hands. It was a chilly, early week in April, remember. Your husband's arm shall be round you. He shall draw back your fair head that he may kiss your sweet lips. It will be but a fancy sketch. Perhaps you will tell me that it never happened? Exactly so. Still, I am better at likenesses than you deem possible. I will do it, and I will call it, 'Honeymoon of Lady Elaine Harwood and Roland O'Hara, the condemned felon.' I will have another picture, 'Rage of the Countess of Donnamore when she discovers her daughter's marriage.' The countess shall be like a Hecate. She shall appear in her white dressing-gown, her black hair floating on her shoulders. The scene shall be in her boudoir. You shall kneel weeping at her feet; she shall be gnashing her teeth, and with clenched fist upraised to strike you upon the mouth."

Christine's eyes blazed. She grinned in the excess of her fury. Her face was deadly white. It was as the face of a fiend. Lady Elaine sat up and looked at her governess with eyes distended by terror. In a flash it was revealed to her how much mademoiselle hated the countess, and how that she, Elaine, had been sacrificed to the vengeance of this Frenchwoman.

"And for revenge alone," gasped Elaine, "you brought about this marriage?"

"For revenge!" Christine cried; "for revenge! for revenge! for revenge! I have wrongs which I would fain wipe out in blood! But as that is not possible I will crush and lacerate the heart of the countess as she crushed mine! Crush! What do I mean? She has no heart; but I will wound what is sensitive in her soul—her self-love and her diabolical pride. He says he will not claim you, does he? That you are to come into possession of your estates and enjoy your fine income, and, if you like, marry another man, and the countess mother is not to be annoyed? Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Loud and long rang the satanic laughter of

Christine through the splendid chamber. Strange to say, Elaine did not resent her wrath, as one might have supposed. Her own passions were awake.

Her love for her peasant-born husband was strong in her soul. The picture of her mother's fury, as drawn by Christine, was, she knew by instinct, not one jot exaggerated. Christine must have suffered to be so infuriated. Confused memories of whispers regarding the faded romance of Fitz Stephens and the governess crossed her mind.

"What makes you hate my mother so?" she asked. "Tell me."

And it came to pass that Christine sat down and related the story of her youth to the listening Elaine in nearly the same words she had used when telling the sad tale to Roland in the library in Belgrave Square.

"Have I not cause to thirst for vengeance as the hot cattle thirst for the water brooks on a sultry day? Answer me. Do you know that Julia Saville has cut me across the face with her riding-whip, and your mother has laughed? She has had too much tact to insult me before you—my pupils—because she knew that as children you would not respect me, and she has faith in my powers as an instructress; but every chance that she could get she wounded me to the very core of my heart."

"She is my mother," said Lady Elaine, "and I will not listen to any more of your abuse of her, mademoiselle. Still, I understand how much you have suffered. I see that with your temperament it was enough to drive you mad. I acknowledge, too, that my mother has acted towards you with deliberate cruelty. She has wounded your already stricken heart, but she trusts you. She has confidence in you. She pays you now liberally. She sends you on to this our castle almost as its mistress in her absence. She sent me to Cheltenham as you proposed it. Are you not acting the part of a traitor in the camp?"

"That is the part in life that I have chosen to play," Christine replied, assuming a grand air. "I dared not rebel and tell that woman I hated her. I should have been turned into the street to earn my bread, and have carried my desire for revenge about with me all my life without an atom of hope of gratifying it. I am not as strong as Samson. I cannot pull the house down upon my tormentors and crush them under its ruins. I must wait and watch for the hour of my triumph. It is sure to come. I wish you no harm, Elaine. I think you good—wonderful for one of the heartless class. I could have waited quietly until you were eighteen, and you came into possession of your estate, and then my vengeance would have been full fed when I saw the peasant come and claim you and your lands just as the countess would have given both to Henry, Earl of Levison; but the idiot means to forego his rightful claims. He will join these rebels, and he will be hanged. I dreamt it three times in one night."

"And I—I love him!" cried Elaine. "I love him with all my heart and soul and strength."

"Then let us try and win him back," said Christine, moodily.

A calm followed the exciting scenes which we have depicted. The May weather was delightful. Elaine gained strength in the pure mountain air, and with regard to the rebels and the expected attack on Dungan it seemed that all the excitement had arisen without sufficient cause.

A small detachment of military was posted on the outskirts of the town, and skirmishers sent out in all directions, and the consequence was that the rebels dispersed, and nothing more was heard of them for a long time.

Lady Elaine clung now to Christine as her only friend. She alone knew the secret which was gnawing at the core of her young heart. Christine alone sympathised with her in her ardent wish to reconcile herself with her husband.

Elaine wrote a long, loving letter to her husband, and she asked Christine where it would be likely to find him.

"I should go down to his mother's cottage and ask her," said Christine.

Elaine's heart bounded. She had somehow hardly ever given a thought to the peasant mother of Roland; but now she felt elate and full of the sweetest hope of reaching his heart through charity of the noblest distributed amongst the poor, whose cause he had so much at heart, and also by the tenderest kindness to his mother.

It was true Lady Elaine had scarcely any money at her command. The countess was a disciplinarian, and she never allowed her young daughters the liberty of spending money beyond the amount of a few shillings; but Elaine knew she could command the pantry and the wine-cellar now that she was the eldest daughter of the house in her mother's absence.

It was one lovely day in the second week in May when she obtained leave to stroll out alone in the park and "make sketches," as she said. She took, indeed, her pencil and sketch-book, but she had no idea of using them until she should have seen Mary O'Hara the widow, the mother of Roland.

When a girl loves a man his mother is often a sore being in her eyes. It is true, alas! that in ordinary life jealousies and petty feelings crop up oftentimes like evil weeds in the garden of domestic happiness, and very often, ah! how often, a wife and her husband's mother hate one another cordially.

Before marriage it is different, and though Elaine was legally a wife, her speedy separation from the husband she had only gained to lose placed her in the romantic wilds of first love. She was timid as a fawn, this lovely child-wife, when she quitted the great park gates of Donnamore, and began to wend her way along a wooded lane which she knew led to the farm of the widow O'Hara.

"Does she know?" she asked herself. "Does she know that I am Roland's wife? If so, others may know. I do not at all believe that Mary O'Hara knows one single word about it."

The wooded lane suddenly wound round, and Elaine found herself on an open heath dotted with trees. The mountains stood grouped around, wooded half-way up their sides; they seemed to fall back and form a glorious panorama; at their feet ran a broad, bright stream. Elaine stood and looked on the beautiful valley of the Morah and sighed. Peasants' cottages were dotted about here and there. All of them were picturesquely thatched, and most of them had flowers trained over their porches.

Lady Donnamore would not allow one ugly hovel on the estate.

"I think I see Mary O'Hara's cottage," said Elaine to herself; "it is that one near the wood. I will go and see."

Elaine crossed a little portion of the heath, and then she found herself in a road facing the cottage where Roland was born. There was a patch of bright grass, with a duck pond in its centre—a pond whereon about half a dozen rather lean ducks were swimming. The cottage was long, low, one-storied, thatched, with diamond-paned lattice windows, and a porch overgrown with some yellow flowers peculiar to the district.

Elaine walked timidly up to the porch, went under it, and saw a door wide open, a kitchen, clay-floored and clear swept, a young woman seated in a Windsor chair, plucking a lean fowl.

"Mrs. O'Hara?—" began Elaine.

In a moment the woman had flung the fowl aside, taken off her coarse apron, and was bowing humbly to my little lady.

"Good-morning," said Elaine, smiling. "Can I see Mrs. O'Hara?"

The young woman looked grave.

"Has not your ladyship's honour heard?" she said.

"No," Elaine answered, turning white. "Is she dead?"

"Worse, your ladyship's honour; she's mad—clean daft, and wanders about begging, barefoot. It's not what she deserved, your ladyship, sure, and she was the industrious widow, was Mary, but she could not make the rent now; and

Roland, her big son away, and all the others so small, and then Mr. Foster told her that go she must, and he sent at the half-quarter and seized her stock, and indeed he was hard, for the beds were sold from under the children, and then came the news that Roland, as fine a young man, your ladyship's honour, as you could meet between this and Dublin town, had joined the Fenians, and was hiding about in the country. That last drove her wild. She went screaming like mad all down the valley, and ran at her youngest child with a knife. The two younger children are in the poorhouse. The two others are out at work in a farm, but Mary is wandering about begging. Oh, it's awful to see her!"

Elaine pressed half-a-crown into the young woman's hand.

"Do you live here?" she asked, through her tears.

"Yes. My husband works it now, your ladyship's honour; but it's mortal hard to pay the rent."

Lady Elaine went out into the fresh spring morning, and she asked herself if it was indeed true that the peasants were ground under the heel of Foster.

"I will tell papa! I will have him turned out," the girl said to herself, vehemently.

At that moment Elaine saw a horseman approaching across the heath. He cantered up lightly to her side, and took off his hat, bowing almost down to the saddle. She knew him at once. He was Henry, Earl of Levison, eldest son of the Marquis of Carrig Flynn. He was blonde, golden-haired, golden-moustached, beautiful by dint of regularity of feature and delicacy of colouring, but there was something cruel about the thin lips, there was an unlovely gleam in the blue eyes.

"Lady Elaine, I have not slept for nights. I have been so longing to see you, and yet I feared to call. May I return with you now to the castle? and will you give me some lunch? I have ridden ten miles."

"Certainly," Elaine said.

Lord Levison called to a boy to take his horse.

"Lead him on to Donnamore," he said. "I am going to walk."

Then he sprang to the ground. Soon he and Elaine were walking along the same wooded lane which Elaine had just before trodden alone. Elaine knew that this elegant and fashionable nobleman was the husband chosen for her by her mother.

She contrasted his light, courtly grace and his blonde beauty with the sombre magnificence of Roland's physique, with the turgid and impassioned darning of his words when last he had spoken to her, and it fell out that the gay and scented darling of the London season seemed mean and contemptible compared with the peasant-born young man, with his wrongs, his desperate courage, and his contempt of her weakness.

A bend in the lane, and Lady Elaine stood face to face with her husband!

CHAPTER XVII.

The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gold for a that.

Her husband! In the roughest garb that a reckless poverty can affect—a coarse shirt, shaggy coat, nether garments of the same, shoes old and covered with dust, a shapeless felt hat, and a face worn, white, haggard, with wild eyes and compressed lips.

This was the vision that met the eyes of the daintily-reared daughter of an earl. And what did O'Hara see? His wife; his lovely, aristocratic girl bride whom he had loved with so insatiable a love; whom he had vowed so madly to make his own, and now who looked at him, he thought, with horror mingled with disgust.

It was horror indeed at sight of his misery, his poverty, his sad, wild face, beautiful in its despair—but not horror of him; as he fancied. The expression of petulance, which looked like disgust, was simply Elaine's annoyance at the

presence of the blonde, handsome, careless, smiling Earl of Levison.

"If he only were not here," thought Lady Elaine.

Roland had fled from her in rage and despair at her coldness. He saw her in airy and elegant costume, daintily equipped, from her beautiful hat of grey satin and rich plume to her exquisite shoes buckled and high-heeled.

What an elegant robe was that grey costume and the scarf of grey satin thrown over her shoulders, and the lace ruffle and knot of rose ribbon at the snowy, slender throat. He saw his wife side by side with an exquisite who might just have leaped from his costly thoroughbred in Rotten Row, where he might have been escorting a duchess.

A handsome, fair, blue-eyed, pink-and-white complexioned, yet not effeminate man, for the earl was tall and muscular. Roland saw him with his wife and he believed him to be a rival. He believed that Elaine would have given her right hand to be quit of him, the peasant, that she might marry the earl.

Roland had seen the earl before, both here in the Morah Valley and once or twice in London. He knew him at once. All his wild love for Elaine rose up in him again when he saw her with this rival. He paused and spoke to her in a voice hoarse with rage and pain:

"You did not think you would meet me?"

"Oh, no, I did not know. Your mother—I am so sorry."

Roland smiled bitterly.

"Foster has driven her mad. It was right, I suppose, as she could not pay her rent, and one of the penalties the poor must pay for being poor. You think it right, I suppose, that as she could not pay her rent she should have her stock seized and be turned out?"

Henry Lord Levison had stared in blank amazement, and now listened in towering wrath to this insolent familiarity of this peasant.

"Fellow," said he, "take off your hat and speak to Lady Elaine Harwood with deference."

"Not a whit more respect will I show to her than I show now. I do not reverence Lady Elaine. She is one led about by every jack-nape, male or female, who chooses to influence her. She is without a human woman's heart, as all you aristocrats are."

Henry Lord Levison sprang like a tiger on Roland O'Hara, and strove to hurl him to the earth, but the peasant-born youth had the will and sinew, and now rage and jealous love lent him the strength of a young giant. In an instant he had thrown his rival to the ground violently, and had planted a savage blow on his fair and handsome face, which disfigured it for days; then he rose and fled. Elaine called wildly after him; even ran after him, crying out:

"Roland! Roland!" but he neither heard nor heeded, so it seemed, for he fled away, and the young earl arose, stunned and bleeding, from the ground. He was too giddy and weak just then to rush after Roland. He sat upon the grass by the roadside, wiped the blood from his face, and uttered an oath low and deep.

He was too well bred not to desire that this oath should be unheard by the Lady Elaine. He thought he only uttered it to the bright green grass and the sweet spring flowers which crowded in profusion under the luxuriant hedge; but it was not only golden cowslip and and blue-eyed campanula that bowed their lovely heads in the fresh breeze, and murmured together of the blow and the blood and the anger and the oath that had befallen in that fairy land under the bank.

If Puck or any other elves came out that May night under the forest of convolvuli and bluebells to gossip of the ugly fray between mortals, which had happened that day, we are not keen witted enough to have ascertained, but certainly one mortal fairer than a fairy heard the oath, the threat of vengeance; saw the awful look of resentment in the eyes of the prostrate noble, and understood, with all the wifely instinct of true love, that her husband had made a deadly and powerful foe in the Earl of Levison.

"Hound!" muttered the earl; "he is one of that rebel crew; he shall swing for this as surely as my name is Henry Levison!"

This was the family name of the house of Carrig Flynn. Then, seeing Lady Elaine looking at him with white face and fear-distended eyes, he tried to laugh, though his whole head ached fearfully from the blow Roland had given him. He was very naturally enraged, and he felt humiliated that Elaine, whom he said to himself was the loveliest creature in the world, should have witnessed how powerless he had been in the hands of the young savage whom he had meant to chastise.

"Yonder ruffian," he said, "hit me a cowardly blow unawares. I will have him apprehended. Is it not that rascally O'Hara, who came to London as a clerk, then ran away and joined the Fenians? I am quite positive I recognised the fellow. I remember him about here two or three years ago, and again in London of late."

"He did not strike you unawares, Lord Levison. You first attacked him, then he struck you in self-defence."

The colour rushed in a flood to the earl's pale face when Elaine thus defended the rude rebel O'Hara.

"Lady Elaine, you are too kind to these wretches; it is wrong. You get no gratitude. The fellow spoke to you so savagely that I wished to punish him. It seems I get neither sympathy nor thanks from your ladyship. I should not wonder if I don't have concussion of the brain from the blow. The fellow is ripe for murder—ripe for any crime!"

"I am truly sorry you are hurt," Elaine said, gently; "but please don't defend me again if any of these people speak to me roughly. I wish to be a friend to them all. I—Here is your horse, Lord Levison; mount him, and ride very gently up to Donnamore, and there you must have your head bathed, and you must have some wine, and try to sleep."

The boy leading the earl's horse had met O'Hara, and had come back to see what was the matter, for the loud sound of the angry voices had reached his ears.

The earl therefore mounted his horse, not without difficulty, and rode on to Donnamore, where the housekeeper and Christine between them attended to him with care and kindness. He went away in the afternoon, thinking Elaine the oddest and most lovely creature he had ever seen in his life, quite determined to marry her as the countess wished him to do, but yet filled with a strange and tormenting doubt of his own power to make her care for himself.

"She is either a perfect little saint or a cunning little sinner," the young earl said to himself that night, while he smoked in the grand library at Court-raven, his father's family seat. "In either case I don't care a snap. I will marry Elaine Harwood. Yes, I swear it, even if I found out something very ugly about her young ladyship. She has quite fascinated me, and she shall be Countess of Levison and Marchioness of Carrig Flynn."

Henry, Earl of Levison, was one of the best "matches" in the matrimonial market. Mothers with daughters, fair or unfair, looked on the heir to a marquise with eager, anxious eyes; young ladies fluttered and flushed, and a few of them simpered when he chose to address them. He knew that three parts of the daughters and mothers were, metaphorically, at his feet. The coldness of Elaine piqued his vanity. Her beauty fired his fancy—his handsome lordship had not much of a heart; his curiosity also was piqued concerning Elaine.

He always had said that he liked a woman with what he called "go" in her. His lady mother had often been in terror lest Henry should bring an actress bride—some dashing, brilliant beauty, who had already had half a dozen strange escapades, and perhaps a dozen equivocal love affairs—to reign at Court-raven.

Henry had too much aristocratic pride for that, but still he in his heart despised what he called a "bread-and-butter miss." He had fancied that the primly brought up little

beauty whom her mother and his mother would fain have made his wife, might belong to this class.

He discovered her wandering alone in the green valley of the Morah, a perfect vision of loveliness, with a womanly look of sadness lurking in the shadows of her wondrous blue eyes, and also, it seemed to the earl, as if fire and passion smouldered mysteriously in their depths. To him she was cold as a marble goddess, but that only made him care for her the more.

"Yes, I will marry her, even if she hates me!" the handsome earl said to himself. "It must be exciting to have a wife who hates one. What fun to tame her, by George!"

So the earl went three or four times a week to Donnamore. His young sisters with their young governesses were likewise staying at Court-raven. The earl had only intended to stay a couple of weeks in Ireland, merely to transact some business for his father, the marquis, with his land agent, for the London season was now at its height, and the young man rejoiced in all the pleasures of the town, indeed he appreciated them with a keen relish. Now, however, he found a sweeter, subtler charm in the presence of Elaine. Many parties were made up by the four governesses and the young people two or three times a week, picnics, boating excursions—for the river flows broad and deep about three miles from Donnamore—and little soirées, to which mademoiselle invited a few other young aristocrats who were passing the summer at their parents' country seats.

Now all these had the appearance of juvenile parties, children's parties, good, honest Fraulein Secher called them. The earl was really the only "grown up man of the party," but all the same his fancy grew daily more fired by the beauty of Elaine, and the mystery of her increasing sadness deepened the spell which made him her captive. Christine watched all and rejoiced.

"The greater will be her disappointment," she said to her vengeful soul, when she thought of the countess.

She wishes Elaine to be Marchioness of Carrig Flynn, this clever youth in the Cabinet—Prime Minister, perhaps, before ten years are over, for he has great talents for politics, though he has led hitherto the life of a butterfly. Yes, she wishes Elaine to sit next in rank to the Princess of Wales.

"Then, oh, then, I will come forward and say whose wife she is just as the earl has proposed to the baughty woman for her child's hand and been accepted with well-bred exultation! Ah, what a supreme moment that will be. I must allow the world to talk of the approaching nuptials, and then I will say, 'Pardon, my lady, your daughter is already a wife, and, if I am not mistaken—'"

Christine smiled and nodded at her own dark face in the great mirror in her handsome chamber at Donnamore. She was preparing for a drive in the waggonette with her pupils. They were to call and lunch at Court-raven, and then the earl was to accompany them in the waggonette to the river. They were to boat for a couple of hours, and return all together to Donnamore to a tea-dinner, which was to be laid out with much taste and many flowers, under the superintendence of the housekeeper.

Christine was dressing herself in pale mauve and white, a dainty muslin costume, for that blazing July day. She looked almost handsome, there was so much light in her dark eyes, so much colour in her usually sallow cheeks. A long letter lay on her writing-desk, a letter thanking Christine for her diplomacy in bringing about the desired state of things between the earl and Elaine.

"Henry is delightful," wrote the countess, "and I am rejoiced that he is, as you say, dear Mattelle, in your enthusiastic way, 'madly in love with Elaine.' It is quite right that she should be cold and reticent. She inherits from me great dignity of character and repose of manner."

Christine turned away from the glass when she had put the finishing touches to her toilette,

and took up the letter of the countess and read it, and positively grinned as she read.

"Henry then is delightful?" she said, aloud. "Ah, my dear madame, you are right. He has how many estates? How many thousands a year, a hundred? a hundred and fifty? two hundred thousand? And he will be a marquis, and his father is in the Cabinet. Ha, ha, ha! What diamonds! What country seats! What horses; five times richer than you are! What a splendid match, and Mattelle, that good creature Mattelle, has brought it about, has she, by dint of all these children's parties, as that idiot Fraulein calls them? Ah, it is a joke—an excellent joke, the good, meek creature, Mattelle, plotting to bring about a splendid match for your pet of a girl. Ha, ha! thus and thus and thus will I scatter your hopes to the winds, and trample your pride in the dust, and hiss my anathemas into your dull, cold, ivory ears, my Lady Countess of Donnamore."

As Christine spoke she tore the letter across, violently, then threw it upon the ground and trampled upon it vehemently, uttering terrible words between her closely-shut teeth.

A light tap on the door, Christine started. She had hardly time to compose herself, to hide the pieces of the letter.

(To be Continued.)

HESTER'S JEWELS.

"If I only were 'rich,' I sighed softly,
"To give to the suffering poor,
Or wise—to be teaching somebody,
Or strong—helpful work to endure.

"I then could show love to the Master,
Far better than idling here now,
Being stupid, and poor, and a woman,
What work can I do, Lord, and how?"

There's Hester, with basket and trowel!
"Stop! Where are you going, my dear?"

A slight, little, poorly-clad maiden,
At the call, turned about and drew near.

Her small, sober face dimpled over
As she answered: "I thought I would go
To the wood for the red partridge berries,
And lichens, and mosses, for Jo—"

"Jo Campbell; you know she is failing—
Has grown far too weary and weak,
To go, as she used to each autumn,
Her green winter garden to seek.

"So I thought I would like to surprise her,
And show her the Lord she loves well
Remembers her still, in her weakness,
And so sends me down to the dell.

"Good-bye." I went back to my dreaming,
Till sofa and firelight were not,
Then, silently, rose a bright vision—
A crystalline, glittering grot.

There 'mid the crown-jewels of heaven,
I saw, wrought in emerald fair
And rubies, the mosses and berries
That told a sick saint of God's care.

"These are Hester's," I said, very softly;
"These are Hester's," one echoing spake;
And so I learned, sleeping, a lesson
That brought me true vision awake.

E. L.

A SHARP young fellow sold forty-eight bibles in Chicago by having printed on the covers, "One thousand recipes for making handsome women."

NOTICE.

THE advent of the new year, and the infusion of new blood into our Editorial Department will be pregnant, we trust, with results alike beneficial to our readers and satisfactory to ourselves. Entering upon the new year resolute for the work, it will be our ambition to make the LONDON READER equal, if not superior, to its contemporaries. Those who have passed from childhood to middle age as subscribers to the LONDON READER will well understand our rule—to have every number fresh, original, and attractive, which can only be assured by the engagement of the best writers.

There is no verdict so reliable as that of the people, who admit that the LONDON READER is not merely distinguished for its unequalled Tales and Sketches, but contains an entertaining and useful variety of Biography, Articles, Poetry, History, Anecdotes, Facsimile, and General Information.

For the current year the LONDON READER will continue its successful career under the most favourable auspices, and those who have never taken it would speedily do so if they knew half the good things in store for our readers. Our staff of contributors will comprise the liveliest storytellers, and number amongst them the best authors of the day in every department of literature.

Our reading matter, household receipts, &c., will be specially selected and written for the instruction and amusement of young men and women, and as nothing will appear which may not be read by every member of a family, we confidently look forward to increasing our already enormous circulation.

With the view of encouraging embryo genius, we invite amateur authors to forward to the Editor their lucubrations, with the assurance that they will receive our best attention. The multiform queries of our correspondents will be answered by a gentleman possessing acumen, knowledge, and experience, and altogether we confidently rely upon making our LONDON READER as superior to its contemporaries as is an Hyperion to a Satyr. As it is the largest, so it will be our care to make it the best, and therefore the cheapest, of the numerous Penny Weeklies.—Ed.]

A SHREWD FARMER.

DURING the Franco-German war two hundred Uhlands arrived in a Norman village. One of the peasants hurried to a neighbouring hamlet to warn a well-to-do farmer that he might expect a visit from the unwelcome raiders. The farmer was equal to the emergency. Calling his wife and daughters, all went to work with a will.

Torn quilts, tattered petticoats, dilapidated gowns, were thrown over the backs of the cattle, enveloping them up to their horns, while their feet and heads were bound with straw. Then the sheep and goats were treated in the same fashion; bottles of medicine were scattered about; a large trough was filled with water, and in the midst was placed a great syringe. Up came the Uhlands; but at the sight of the strangely-attired animals and the monster squirt they hesitated. At last one of the troopers inquired what was the matter.

"The rinderpest," said the farmer. He had to answer no more questions. His visitors turned their horses' heads and galloped off to make requisition elsewhere.

AN experiment at acclimatisation is now being made in Holland. Ten thousand salmon fry from California have been put down in the Meuse, at Blorick, and 20,000 others are about to be added.

A woven book has been manufactured at Lyons, France, the whole of the letterpress being executed in silken thread.



[SYMPATHY.]

STRONG TEMPTATION: A Tale of Two Sinners.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook
Him," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HER DEBUT.

The music breathing from her face.

A DECEMBER night, clear and fine, the moon and stars shining in all their brilliance, seemed to invite people to seek amusement out of doors.

The night was a marked one to lovers of music. Signor Gabrielle, the renowned maestro, gave a grand concert at St. John's Hall. Not only were the reigning queens of song to be present, but a débutante was announced—a pupil of the signor's own—who, people said, was to take the world by storm.

No concert for which Signor Gabrielle's talents had been secured would have been a failure. This special one seemed likely to be a great success. Not a seat was to be had. No stall was disengaged.

Before the clock chimed eight, the hour for entertainment to commence, the doors had been closed, and a large board placed outside on which the magic word "full" was printed in large red letters.

Within all was a pleasant buzz of expectation. The English are ever generous in their welcome of a stranger. Besides, they had heard much in Madame Harold's favour.

The ladies laid down their fans, the men raised their opera-glasses when, after one or two preliminary songs, the pianist commenced the

accompaniment to the best-known of Scottish ballads, and the débutante stood before them.

A beautiful woman, young, despite her stately step and queenly carriage—a face which set the audience wondering where they had seen it before. Once, twice she bowed her acknowledgments of her reception, then in a rich, sweet voice she began the saddest love story ever sung.

"Auld Robin Grey" had a new charm that night from the inexpressible pathos of the singer. When the last line had died away a perfect storm of applause broke forth. Madame Harold was surely a great success; but her triumph moved her little. There was no joy in her glorious dusky eyes. Again she bowed to her patrons, and withdrew.

From that night Dora Hastings never needed to trouble herself with pecuniary cares. Her voice was her fortune. Without effort she earned more than she cared to spend. With one bound she leaped to popularity. Before her husband had been dead six months she was the favourite concert singer of the day, and the public, who hung entranced on the pathetic words which came from her clear, soprano voice, never guessed that she had a story as sad and hopeless as any she uttered in song. Many asked:

"Who is she?"

One or two art critics said, decidedly:

"That woman has a history."

But no one linked the favourite singer with her who, so short a time before, had been queen of Belgravian ball-rooms. In all London only three people knew her secret save the faithful maid who had been with her on that fatal journey to Blankshire, and these three were little likely to betray it.

Signor Gabrielle would keep it for his own sake; Rosamond Ellerslie because her one object in life was to separate Dorothea Hastings and Vere Eastcourt; while Lord Marsden loved the banker's widow too well to pain her by revealing what she took so much pains to hide.

He was a real friend to Dora at this period of her life—the one link between the old life and

the new. Weak and effeminate he might seem to some; for her he had the most devoted love, and unselfishness enough never to step beyond the rôle she had assigned him. He was the only one who knew her private address except Signor Gabrielle. All professional letters went to the signor's for her.

People generally had an idea she lived somewhere west. Lord Marsden was her one visitor, and he never came to the Maida Vale apartments without some offering in his hand. He never brought things of value, only rare hot-house flowers and delicate fruit, or tickets for some play she had wished to see. Dorothea began to rely on him as on a brother.

As the spring came on and London began to fill with the gay votaries of fashion a dread troubled Dora that her peace would be destroyed. Surely some of the hundreds who had poured sweet flattery into her ears would recognise her in Madame Harold?

Dora need not have been alarmed. This great world of ours has too many interests to occupy itself with the past. Many remarked the resemblance between the beauty and the artiste, but no one suspected they were the same, not even Lady Kyrle.

Maude was delighted with Madame Harold, and never missed a chance of hearing her. Sir Cecil, who had just been elected member for the county, had his time too full to attend many concerts, but his wife, accompanied by a lady friend, often gratified her taste for music.

"Whom does Madame Harold remind you of, Lord Marsden?" she asked him, abruptly, one day, when he was calling upon her.

"Of no one," he replied, decidedly. "Madame Harold has the loveliest face I ever saw. It is beyond all comparisons."

"But you knew Mrs. Hastings?"

Maude has no idea he had been intimate with the banker, and her brother had never told her Mrs. Ellerslie's prediction that he wished to become his successor.

"I had that pleasure," replied Lord Marsden, stiffly, "and I am faithful to my opinion that I

infinitely prefer Madame Harold of the two." "Then you know her, too?" returned Lady Kyrle, catching at the words. "Lord Marsden, you will be invaluable to me if you will only give me an introduction."

"She does not sing at private parties," he returned, shortly, feeling that he had got himself into a dilemma. "In fact, I believe St. John's Hall is the only place where she appears."

"I wanted her to teach me. I used to be rather satisfied with my own singing, but since I have heard Madame Harold I have never cared to touch the piano."

"An introduction is not necessary for that, Lady Kyrle. If you write to Madame Harold, at Signor Gabrielle's, I am sure she will be most happy to receive you as a pupil if she has time."

"Does she live at Signor Gabrielle's?"

"No. It is merely her professional address."

"She is very beautiful?"

"Undoubtedly."

"She always makes me think of poor Mrs. Hastings. Lord Marsden, it's a strange thing to ask you, but do you think she could be her sister? The resemblance is really startling."

"I am positive that Madame Harold has no sister. A friend of mine mentioned to me that Mrs. Hastings went to her own relatives on her husband's death."

At this moment Vere Eastcourt was announced. He was staying in London, and spent a great deal of his time with his sister. It was no pleasant surprise for him to meet Lord Marsden. They exchanged greetings very coldly, and the young peer took his leave.

"I wonder you can bear that insufferable creature, Maude."

"I think he's one of the best-tempered men in London, Vere. How on earth can he have offended you? Cecil likes him very well."

"Is he staying in London?"

"He lives here, I think. I don't believe he's been down to Blankshire for months."

"When is he going to be married?"

"I didn't even know he was engaged. Who is the lady?"

"Have you never heard. I thought, at least, she would have written to you."

"You are talking in riddles, Vere. I don't believe Lord Marsden is engaged to anyone, and as he has just informed me his idea of beauty is a public singer, and no other woman can compare to her, I should hope, for his betrothed's sake, that you are mistaken."

"Rosamond Ellerslie told me positively that he was engaged to Mrs. Hastings; that the wedding was to take place as soon as her year of mourning was up."

"She was mistaken, Vere. I'll stake my diamond ring, Cecil's Christmas present, on it," holding up the finger on which she wore it.

"I don't think Rosamond at all likely to be mistaken. Women are generally clear-sighted in such things."

"Well, I am a woman," returned Lady Kyrle, with pretty imperiousness, "and my opinion is that Lord Marsden isn't engaged to anyone at all, and not in love with anyone unless it be Madame Harold."

"Who is Madame Harold?"

"Vere—Vere! you are really too dreadful. Do you never look at a newspaper or read a catalogue? Madame Harold is the singer of the day. She came out last winter, took the world by storm, and has convinced me that my attempts were utter failures. And you actually mean to tell me you have never heard of Madame Harold?"

"Never; I confess to my ignorance."

"Well, I'll take you to see her herself some day by way of punishment."

"Better not, Maude. I don't care for concerts."

Maude dropped her careless tone and asked, earnestly:

"What do you care for, Vere?"

No answer. There are some wounds so painful they will not bear the tenderest touch. Lady Kyrle went up to her brother and placed one hand upon his shoulder.

"Vere, what is it troubling you. Do you think I am blind that I cannot see how altered you are?"

"I am not altered lately, child."

"Yes," she went on, sadly, "I think you are. Since you came home this last time I have noticed it more. I have spoken to Cecil about it. He puts me off with excuses. Sometimes I think, Vere, he knows your secret."

"I have no secret, Maude."

She shook her head.

"You have one, or you could not be so indifferent to all around you. You could not answer me the question I have asked you, Vere. What do you care for?"

"Few things, I am afraid, little sister. My heart has not had room for many."

"A heart that cannot hold many things must be filled up either by a great sorrow or a great love. Which is it, Vere?"

"And if it were both, dear—a great sorrow coming through a great love."

"I can hardly understand love bringing sorrow. Mine has brought me so much happiness."

"But all love is not like yours, Maude. Some is hopeless."

"Well, I would not have such love," spoke Lady Kyrle, decidedly; "I would tear it out of my heart. Vere, I don't know much of such trouble, but I am sure of one thing: if you don't kill such love it kills you. It eats your heart away."

And Vere thought she might be right. He had done all he could to test the truth of Rosamond Ellerslie's assertion. He had hunted and caused others to hunt for Bryan Hastings' widow very carefully, but no ray of success had crowned his effort.

All he could now learn was that Mrs. Hastings had left Blankshire under the escort of a gentleman whose description tallied with that of Lord Marsden. In fact, it must have been the peer himself, for one of the railway officials by whom he was well known said as much to Vere's envoy.

Here all clue ended. Vere was not satisfied with his cousin's representation. He got Mrs. Yorke's address from Mr. Evans, and disturbed that lady in the enjoyment of tea and toast. He told her he was seeking her daughter, and she flatly persisted that her daughter was dead.

Nothing would shake her testimony. She quite believed that in denying Dora's existence she was earning the everlasting gratitude of Sir Cecil, and Sir Cecil Kyrle was her benefactor, as she told his cousin.

Vere poured out the whole story to Mr. Evans. It seemed very strange to the worthy solicitor. Here was a woman deliberately hiding herself from a man who loved her and a fortune which belonged to her—a woman young enough to value both these gifts. What was her object? He looked grave.

"Mr. Eastcourt, this lady must possess a strong will and a clear head. Everything we've heard about her goes to prove it. She must have some motive for hiding herself, and what it is we can't fathom, but I'm sure of one thing: till she chooses to be found no effort of ours will find her."

"Do you think she is going to marry Lord Marsden?"

"I should say not. It is generally believed that his lordship thinks of marrying the new singer, Madame Harold. Certainly he is her shadow."

"Everyone seems talking about this Madame Harold."

"And I don't wonder. She is a glorious woman. If I were a few years younger I should be wanting to marry her myself."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONCE AGAIN.

Old love is waking,
Shall it wake in vain?

MADAME HAROLD—or to call her by the name

we know better, Dora Hastings—sat in the pretty parlour of her Maida Vale apartments; her small, white hands clasped on her lap; her dusky eyes raised to Lord Marsden's face as he gave her the history of his yesterday's call upon Lady Kyrle.

"I ask you, Dora"—he generally used her Christian name, her professional one was too formal; her own title of Mrs. Hastings he could not give her in a place where she was known only as Madame Harold—"I ask you, Dora," he went on, earnestly, "how long you are going to live this life, letting every purseproud, fashionable lady think you will spend your time in giving her lessons? Dora, it is months since I spoke to you of love. You told me you had none to give me. Darling, I ask none, only let me have a right to protect you and take care of you. Let me be your friend still; only suffer me to give you the shelter of my name!"

She shook her head.

"Friends we must always be. I never could forget all you have done for me these weary months, but Henry, no nearer tie can ever exist between us. It grieves me to seem ungrateful for your love. I think you are the truest friend I have in the world, but I will never give you such a poor, dead heart as mine."

"Then I think I shall go away, Dora," he said, impulsively. "I have done you harm without ever meaning it. The world cannot understand friendship such as ours. They cannot believe in a man's love for a woman to whom he is neither lover nor brother. Society links our names together: if you will not suffer the prediction to become true, at least for a time I must go away."

"Why need people busy themselves with us?"

"Because you are the most beautiful woman in London, and as a singer, the public think they have a right to interest themselves in your future. As for me, I am too rich to be a bachelor."

"And when society is busy settling someone else's fate, you will come back, Henry, and be my friend again?"

"I shall always be your friend till death. You must write to me all about yourself, and Dora, if ever you should change, remember a word will bring me back."

"It is losing you for ever if you stay away till then," she said, earnestly.

"I am only going for a few months. One reason is, Dora, I am afraid of betraying your secret. Lady Kyrle has noticed your resemblance to yourself, and she thinks I know more than I will say."

So it came about that Henry Lord Marsden went away, and Dorothea pursued her way alone. A note soon reached her from Lady Kyrle, inquiring her terms for lessons, and Signor Gabrielle was instructed to write in reply that Madame Harold received no pupils. Maude was disappointed, but other interests were flocking to her, and she soon forgot her desire and its denial.

Sir Cecil Kyrle told his wife the secret he had been keeping from her in love, how Lakewood in very truth was not theirs—never had been theirs, but belonged to the woman they had known as Dora Hastings, Harold Kyrle's only child, Madame Leconte's lamented young English teacher from London.

It was a great blow to Maude Kyrle. She would have married her husband just as readily had he been poor as rich, but for two years she had reigned as mistress of Lakewood, and for more than one she had looked on it as her boy's heritage. She took the matter to heart, sadly urging that they ought to find out Mrs. Hastings and make restoration.

"No," replied her husband, simply; "the moment Dorothea comes to me and asks for her rights I will restore them freely, but not until then. I am convinced she knows her honours, but will not claim them."

He had received the loan with a few pencilled words of thanks, and an assurance that the writer was well. He knew, therefore, no po-

canary trouble was harassing his cousin, or he might have noted differently.

Vere Eastcourt did not renounce Mrs. Ellerslie's acquaintance. He was aware Rosamond was faulty, but he always regarded her as more sinned against than sinning. Long after Maude had ceased to visit her he was to be seen at her side in public. Rosamond gloried in his presence. She often thought that if Heaven would only remove poor old Colonel Ellerslie from her path, the object of her maiden days might yet be obtained. Vere seemed nearer to her than when she was Rosamond Stuart. Once Mr. Eastcourt took Mrs. Ellerslie to a concert—only they two—no looker on to mar the tete-a-tete. Rosamond blushed through the rouge on her cheeks as she read one name on the programme. At the same moment Vere observed: "And so Madame Harold is going to sing. I am glad we shall hear her. Maude used to rave about her."

"I don't care for her particularly."

It was a brilliant concert, and lovers of music like Rosamond and Vere enjoyed it. He had almost forgotten the mention of Madame Harold, when Rosamond expressed a wish for some refreshment. When Vere returned with an ice, he found the interval was over. The second part of the concert had commenced, and the audience were listening spell-bound to Sullivan's well-known ballad "Once again."

If thou couldst know that I was free,
And that thou wert true.

Vere forgot Rosamond; he forgot everything in one great doubt, which filled his whole soul. He listened breathlessly till the end—

Old love is waking, shall it wake in vain?

Then the doubt was solved. He felt no other woman than Dora could so touch him. The fashionable singer and his life's love were one and the same. Mrs. Hastings was Madame Harold.

The applause was long and hearty. The favourite seemed to have surpassed herself; besides, this was her last appearance that season. An encore was inevitable, and Madame Harold, instead of repeating "Once again," sang the ballad which had first endeared her to a London audience, "Auld Robin Grey." As she bowed before retiring her eyes fell, for the first time, on Vere and his companion. She looked steadily at them for one instant. Rosamond, her face flushed, was talking eagerly to Vere. He looked supremely happy—looked so only because he had just found his lost darling, but who was to tell that to the woman on the concert stage? She gave to the scene another interpretation, and at that sight she gave way. The blow was too keen. Madame Harold, overcome—with the heat, the papers said the next morning—sank fainting on the ground.

CHAPTER XXX.

SAVED.

On her brow one read the divine beatitude.
Blessed are the pure in heart.

A CHURCH, no time-worn ancient edifice but one of those wooden buildings beautiful in all save the associations and history years alone can give; two aisles divided by a nave with pillars of massive stone; the seats, low benches of carved oak; neatly painted windows, through which the summer sunlight poured in sweet subdued light; a gilt screen to separate the choir and the priest from the congregation; a strange, sweet perfume of flowers from the altar; some score of devout worshippers, and a grand song of praise from clear treble voices, alternating with low, intoned sentences; such was the aspect of St. Martin's on a summer afternoon in the year after Mr. Hastings' death.

The church is what people term ritualistic; that means, it is always open to the weary wayfarer, and its priests are ready to hear and relieve the troubles of burdened souls. All in its services is bright and beautiful, typical of the

heaven to which they should lead. There is a realness, a fervour, a reverence about those who worship there, which has ever characterised what men call the "extreme party."

Even song is over; the congregation disperse; the choir take off their white robes and return to their secular calling; the priest comes slowly down the aisle, thinking of the souls committed to his care, when from one of the benches there rises a woman and comes towards him.

"I am in bitter trouble; will you help me?"

"To be in trouble is the greatest claim on us," he answers, gently. "Follow me."

And so in St. Martin's vestry she was known as Dora Yorke, Mrs. Hastings, and Madame Harold, sits face to face with the St. Martin's vicar.

He is not old in years, barely thirty-five has passed over his head, but he has known many a trouble himself. Many burdened ones have poured their sorrows into his ear. Hubert Eardley has seen almost every phase of suffering, and he knows instinctively that the woman before him has no fancied grief, no imagined wrong, but some real bitter heart trouble.

For full five minutes they sat thus, neither speaking; then Dorothea said, brokenly:

"My whole life is one mistake. All I cared for, all I sought, has slipped away from me. I have nothing in the world to live for. What am I to do?"

"We must all linger here our appointed time," said Hubert Eardley, gently, noticing her deep mourning; "when those dearer to us than life have gone on before, however burdensome this world may seem, we yet have the consolation of knowing they have suffered its toils before us."

"You are mistaken," said Dora, simply, touching her black dress; "you think my trouble is for the dead. I lost my husband not quite a year before, but I do not grieve for him. I married him because he was rich; he chose me because I was beautiful; our married life was torture to us both."

"Then what is your trouble?"

"I have lost my best friend—the man I once thought I should marry. I have loved him ever since I knew what love meant, and I have lost him. I cannot go on with the life I have led, it leaves me too much time to think. I must act; I must work; I must fill up my life, and I come to you to tell me how."

"Yes," assented Hubert Eardley, understanding how it was with her, "work is the best cure for a mind diseased, but different works are fitted for us, how am I to tell what is best for you? You have probably been used to a luxurious, easeful life."

"I have known hard poverty; at present I work for my bread."

"You work?"

"Yes, I am Madame Harold."

"Then surely you have your work cut out for you. With such a gift as yours, how can your life be empty. For human love, the love of art is the best substitute, the best consoler."

"No," cried Dorothea, the old passion sounding in her voice. "Oh! sir, you cannot have loved to say so. Art may be much to a woman, it may be her comfort for many troubles, it may be a leading to something else, but art cannot fill a woman's whole life and heart; it never can."

"Not when it is as successful as yours."

"No," sadly. "I sang last night for the last time. I shall never use my voice for money again. He was there. He had paid to see me. The woman who is to be his wife was there too. If I am to keep my reason, I must not see those two together."

"What do you wish to do?" he asked again.

"How can I help you if you will not trust me?"

"I want to enter a convent."

Surprise was written on Hubert Eardley's face. He did not speak, and Dorothea went on:

"I have saved money, I have just enough to live on. If I could only get out of the world, somewhere where it was all peace."

"My dear lady," returned the priest, gently, "a convent is not all peace; no place on earth can be that. A convent is a place for women who have given up their lives to serve Him, who are dead to the world. With your heart full of conflicting passions how can you be one of these?"

"I think it would soon kill me," she answered, frankly. "I should eat my heart away."

"And that would be cowardly."

"Yes."

"You are totally unfit for convent life. All women of strong feeling are."

"I thought I should be better there. I always seem yielding to strong temptation."

"Shutting yourself up in a convent will not save you from strong temptation. Have you no relatives, no friends? Surely at your age you cannot be utterly alone in the world."

"Yes; I am twenty-five, but I have no relations."

"You are positive in your resolve to quit your present life?"

"I am positive. After last night, I could not sing again. I am tired of the world."

"Twenty-five is very young for that. Don't you think in time new ties, new interests, might come to you? There are so many years stretching out before you."

"I think," said Dorothea, with a sob in her voice, "that I must not be left to myself. I am so tired of my own life that I cannot answer for myself. If ever woman stood in need of help, it is I! If ever soul were struggling with strong temptation, it is I! My one cry is, save me from myself!"

"I will, with Heaven's help!" said the priest, raising her from his feet, where she knelt in dumb entreaty. "Come with me."

Her will seemed dead within her. She yielded implicitly to his. It was well for her she had chosen so worthy a guide. She followed him down the aisle, out into the porch, then on into the busy street. The sweet, soft air of the July evening fell on her cheek as she walked on, leaning heavily on Hubert Eardley's arm, till presently he called a cab, and placing her in it, sat down beside her.

Dorothea had not heard the address given to the driver, but she noticed dimly that they passed through many streets, till gradually the West-end was quite lost sight of, and they reached a poorer, less attractive locality. At last they stopped before a tall, white house, and the priest getting out, discharged the cab, and led Dora up the long flight of steps.

The door was opened by a woman of about thirty, whose bright, cheery face glowed with pleasure, as she recognised her visitor.

"We did not hope to see you again so soon, Mr. Eardley."

"I have come on business," he answered, gravely. "Can I see Sister Mary?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Perhaps you will take care of this lady in my absence? She is very tired. We have come a long way. Where shall I find Sister Mary?"

"In the study. She is quite alone."

The clergyman walked upstairs as one who knew the house and its ways, and the other speaker led Dorothea into a pleasant room on the ground floor, and began gently to unfasten her bonnet.

"You look very tired. Shall I get you a cup of tea?"

"No, thank you," returned the unexpected guest. "Yes, I am very tired. Where am I?"

"At St. Martin's Sisterhood. Mr. Eardley is brother of our superior Sister Mary."

"Is she like him?" asked Dora, with sudden interest.

"Indeed she is."

But the question seemed more fully answered when ten minutes later Mr. Eardley came back, followed by a lady some five years his junior, with a sweet, patient face, on which it seemed to Dorothea Heaven's peace was always written.

"My brother says you have come to stay some

weeks with us, and see if you would like our life," began the superior, gently.

"I am sure I shall," returned Dorothea, with the old enthusiasm of her girlhood. "Couldn't I be a sister now, so that I never need go away?"

"We will never send you away while you wish to stay," answered Sister Mary, "and by-and-bye, if you really like our work, you shall be a sister, but we can keep no one whose heart and soul is not with us."

"I must be going," said Mr. Eardley, suddenly. "Can I take any message for you?" to Dorothea. "Is there no one who will be anxious about you?"

"No one," she answered, sadly. "If you would go to fifteen, Trevor Row, and see my maid, she would send my things."

"I will go there with you to-morrow," said Sister Mary. "I think you will like that best."

The priest rose to go. He shook hands with his sister, and that bright little body, Sister Katharine. Then he offered his hand to Dora. It almost seemed to her she was unworthy to touch it. Suddenly she took it in both of hers and kissed it reverently.

"I could not help it," she said, apologetically to Sister Mary; "he has saved me from strong temptation."

(To be Continued.)

FRENCH FLATS.

THESE suites of rooms, now so popular among young married people, are about as unhomelike as boarding-houses—particularly those which are without kitchens. There are restaurants on the ground floor, where tenants are supplied with meals at a fixed price per week. The housekeepers (if women who live in this way can be called housekeepers) in these apartments say they would rather have meals in the restaurant than be bothered by servants—that it is very hard to get on with servants in the French flats. The real reason is that they don't want any trouble.

Old-fashioned people, who believe in a home and home-work, would call them lazy. And, indeed, they seem so. They make no voluntary effort of any kind. If they have to ascend only one story, the elevator must take them up. They wouldn't climb even one pair of stairs. They must have all their rooms on one floor, so that no exertion whatever is required in going from one to another. They get rid of the stair climbing by going into the flats, and now they want to get rid of housekeeping by abolishing the kitchen. The washing is given out, of course, and one servant can do the daily sweeping and dusting and making of beds.

Madame is thus relieved of everything in the way of housekeeping labour, and can give her whole time to reading sickly novels, petting some miserable bit of a dog, trying on this dress or that wrapper, or going out to see the styles and plague some drapers' clerks half out of their senses. Of course she has no children; there is no place for these little ones in a French flat—the most demoralising contrivance of the age.

THE BARONESS OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER the departure of King Reginald the baroness sent for Lady Matilda—now Sister Mary—who hastened to obey the summons.

The Baroness of the Isles communicated the particulars of the recent interview with the king.

The two were in conversation upon the sub-

ject when the brother—who was an envoy from Rushen Abbey, it will be remembered—entered their presence.

He was included in the conversation, and informed of the cause of Matilda's assumption of the veil, and Reginald's threatenings against the maiden.

The brother had come upon a mission from the bishop of St. Mary's and had a charge—a little parish church—in its vicinity.

Of the interior life of Rushen Abbey he was ignorant.

He knew indeed that a new brother had just joined the brotherhood, but of the identity of the new brother with Ivar he was completely unconscious.

This was owing to the caution and discretion of the worthy bishop.

He was murmuring words of condolence, when a sister came in hurriedly with the news that a servant had just brought in—namely, that the king and his train had halted in the park and that some mischief was brewing among them.

The baroness was mistress of herself in emergencies, and was now equal to the situation. She sent forth messengers in every direction to arouse her tenantry.

In the course of the next hour a hundred men were marshalled in the courtyard or upon the battlements.

"I see we can do nothing to-night," said Reginald. "We have waited too long. We were not prompt enough to make up our minds. The opportunity is lost. We must wait for another. When the baroness is off her guard we will come again. Now for home."

The king knew well the determined character of the Baroness of the Isles.

Not anything that he could offer could induce the baroness to surrender to him the girl who had sought refuge in the sisterhood.

"Etheldreda is insensible to threats and bribes alike," thought Reginald. "The girl is safe in the priory unless I plan some treachery. I might get one of my own men into the priory as servant. Good idea. That I will do. Walters is true to me as steel, yet he's a treacherous hound to others. I remember that he was one of her own tenants. He shall go to her and apply for a situation as gardener, forester, even swineherd. Plenty of time. I shall win this game after all."

This Walters was one of the king's body servants. He had done some evil work for the king in secret, and had been well paid for it.

Reginald believed him to be one of the most trustworthy fellows in his service, as indeed he was.

Walters presently appeared.

He was a surly looking fellow, with a low forehead, downcast eyes, and an evil expression of countenance.

"Walters," said the king, "have I not always rewarded you tenfold for all that you have done in my service?"

"Yes, your majesty," said the man. "What is wanted of me now? Does someone stand in your way?"

"I want to get possession of the person of the Lady Matilda," whispered the king. "She is in the priory. She is a sister."

"Then what you ask is impossible."

"Not so. I have thought of a plan that requires time and patience, and a trusty servant. You are that servant. You can put me in possession of this girl!"

"I?"

"You! Were you not one of the tenants of the Baroness of the Isles?"

"Yes, your majesty, and for seven years I was servant at the priory. I left of my own free will, too, wishing to see the world, but the baroness herself wished me to remain."

"Get back your old situation," said the king in a glow of excitement. "Begin as swineherd, if necessary, but get back into the household. Then some night you shall open the gates to my trusty men, and they shall steal Lady Matilda and bring her to me. Do you comprehend?"

"Yes. More—I think I can do what you desire. I know the baroness will take me back, for my father and brother are among her most devoted

servants. The whole affair can be managed secretly and perfectly. Of course there is risk. I should be well paid for that."

"Of course. You are low born, Walters, a servant in the lowest capacity. Would you like to be a gentleman?"

The fellow's eyes gleamed as he said:

"Ah, would I not?"

"If you can do this thing," said Reginald, "if you can steal this girl without making any outcry, if you can carry her outside the walls, and place her in the hands of Wildred and another, and you three bring her safe to me, I will make you as rich as you could desire."

This bribe would have bought Walters' soul.

He thanked the king in a very transport of delight, and he soon after departed upon his treacherous mission.

Two days later the king received, by the hands of one of Walters' brothers, a written message from Walters himself, to the effect that he had seen the prioress, and had proffered to her his services, and that he had been reinstated by her in his old capacity as porter.

Then the king smiled evilly.

"Walters is in the very camp of the enemy," he thought. "He is mine, heart and soul. He will do my bidding, with the wealth I have promised him in full view. With my own ally within the priory walls, the Lady Matilda will be in my hands within a week. Once she is my wife—by force, of course—I'll make my peace with everyone. Only a week, and she is mine!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WEEK passed—two weeks—and still King Reginald received no further report from his spy and traitor in the nunnery. He began to grow anxious.

He employed the tedious days of his waiting in fitting up certain secluded rooms for her in his castle, in providing a woman gaoler for her, and in perfecting all his private arrangements for her coercion, and for her secret residence under his roof.

The project which he had in view—that of compelling a high-born lady to become his wife—was so nefarious, and so calculated to arouse his subjects to the last pitch of fury against him, that he was obliged to proceed with the utmost secrecy and caution.

He took the knight Wildred and one other only into his confidence, and as they were bound to him by mutual crimes and by a thousand ties of self-interest he had no fear lest they should betray him.

Early in the third week after the departure of Walters, King Reginald received by private messenger—Walters' brother—a sealed letter from Walters himself, containing, in rudely-written characters:

"On Thursday evening, by the beech tree, upon the south side of the moat, at soon as the darkness falls."

The king summoned Wildred and his confederate, Garruth, to his private cabinet, and read to them this missive.

Then he promised them great rewards should they prove successful in their effort, and dismissed them to their work.

And that very day, mounted upon the swiftest and most powerful horses in the king's stable, and leading two others of equal speed and endurance, the confederates departed upon their mission.

Thursday evening arrived.

There was no moon, but the starlight was soft and mellow. In the woods and park of the grand old priory dusk shadows filled the stillness.

The pleasure-gardens were silent and deserted. The drawbridge was up, the portcullis lowered.

Matilda stole forth as usual into the dusky, silent garden, and wandered up and down the narrow paths, with her sorrowing eyes fixed upon the pale yellow stars.

"Oh, Ivar, my lost love!" was the plaint that

rose from her soul. "When shall I forget thee? When shall I come to thee in the world to which thou art gone?"

After her, with gleaming eyes and bated breath, like a stealthy tiger, crept Walters, the spy and creature of the king!

The maiden wandered down to the edge of the moat and paused a moment. The still waters were covered over with the shadows of bending trees.

Matilda was about to retrace her steps when she beheld upon the opposite side of the moat, under a spreading beech tree, the stealthy figures of two men.

She turned about, without any suspicion that the presence of those men under the beech tree meant harm to herself, when, suddenly and swiftly as lightning falls, a great black cloak was flung over her head, and she was gathered up in the arms of a strong man.

The scream, which was her first natural utterance, was muffled by those heavy shrouding folds, and scarcely reached the ears of the man who held her prisoner.

Holding her struggling figure in a grip of iron the man half-carried, half-dragged his captive down to the edge of the moat—a distance of but a few feet—and gave a low, faint whistle that sounded like the cry of a night-bird.

The ruffian descended into the boat with Matilda, and the skiff sped back again to the point whence it had come.

"Sure you've got the right girl?" asked Wildred in a whisper, after an awed sort of glance at the black-robed figure and muffled head of the now silent maiden.

"Sure!" said Walters, briefly. "I hope she isn't suffocated! Now up the bank with her. There'll be an outcry presently!"

Wildred assisted Walters to carry the girl to the beech tree, which was the outpost or sentinel of the wood which stretched behind it.

Just in the shadow of this wood the horses waited.

Matilda was hastily strapped to a saddle, the cloak still remaining over her head, her captors mounted, and then the little cavalcade hurried along a wood-path which was thoroughly known to Walters, and after a mile or more of travel reached the highway.

Now they dashed forward at a better rate of speed.

They had gone but a few rods upon the public road, when, with quick alarm, there burst upon the night the sharp and startling peal of the distant priory bell!

"They have missed the girl!" cried Walters, "They will soon miss me also. There are no horses like these at the nunnery, and we have much the start. Forward, then! Put spurs to your horses!"

The men dashed onward in full flight.

The alarm peal of the convent-bell grew fainter and fainter to the ears of the speeding horsemen, and, at length, was lost in the distance.

Then, at last, the villains drew rein. Walters had held from the first the bridle of Matilda's horse in his hand.

Now, as they slackened speed, he regarded curiously, the limp, inert figure lying helplessly upon the horse's neck, and the fear smote him that Matilda was dead.

The same thought occurred at the same moment to Wildred, who exclaimed, sharply:

"The girl is smothered! Take off that cloak from her head, Walters. By my faith, if she be killed the king will have our lives!"

They halted, and Walters removed the muffings from Matilda's face.

How deathly white she looked in the starlight!

Was she dead? The men were in a panic of doubt and terror.

They were near a thread-like stream of water. Garruth dismounted and filled his hat with the clear, cool liquid, and Walters bathed the girl's face, while Wildred poured between her bloodless lips a portion of spirits from a pocket-flask he carried.

Under their rough ministrations Matilda speedily returned to consciousness.

And with consciousness came a realisation of her terrible position and frightful peril.

"Hush!" said Wildred, harshly, believing that she was about to scream. "Not a sound, lady, or we will gag you! Keep still, if you value your personal safety!"

His manner was so menacing that the maiden was still as death.

"Forward!" said Wildred. "I will answer for her! Onward!"

They continued their ride, pushing on over hills and dales, bridges and stones, with small regard for personal ease or security.

Their progress, despite their haste, was necessarily slow, and, at the end of two hours, they halted to rest.

There were no sounds of pursuit. They had distanced all possible pursuers, yet, after a brief pause, they were in saddle again and on the march.

Encumbered by no stately train of followers, as the king had been, regardless of bruises and fatigue, they made the journey, which had taken Reginald so long, in the course of a few hours.

About three o'clock in the morning they drew rein at the castle moat.

The drawbridge was down; the keeper waiting.

The feet of the horses were muffled, and the newcomers rode over and entered the courtyard.

The secret of Matilda's appearance at Castle Rushen was confined to the three men who had effected her capture, to the drawbridge-keeper, and to a soldier of the guard, all of whom the king could trust implicitly.

Wildred and his confederate conveyed their prisoner into a dark and lonely corridor in an unused portion of the castle.

As Matilda began to struggle and to cry out for help in a gasping voice, Wildred clapped his hand over her mouth and the men dragged her onward by main force.

Down a flight of damp stone stairs, through subterranean corridors in which a deadly chill lurked, down to the very donjon keep they carried her.

They halted at last before a massive oaken door bound with iron.

It swung open when Wildred knocked upon it, and a woman with a grim, hard visage and pitiless eyes stood upon the threshold.

As she recognised the visitors she beat a silent retreat into the dungeon and they followed her with their burden.

This subterranean cell had often served as a tomb for living prisoners. More than one victim of the kings of Man had here dragged out a life-long imprisonment.

These damp stone walls had responded to the groans and prayers and frenzied shrieks of strong, brave men, driven to despair and madness by the grim solitude of the place.

But now the damp walls were covered with tapestry.

The floor had been spread with rushes, and also covered thick with tapestry.

A hole which served as fireplace, and communicated with a massive chimney, now contained fire.

A low bed stood in a corner, and there were appurtenances for the toilet.

But wretched the dungeon was a dungeon still, bare and chill and comfortless, with rough stone ceiling, for the cell, like the other dungeons under the castle, had been hewn out of the solid rock.

There was no pretence of luxury—even comfort had not been fully considered. The barest necessities of existence were here—nothing more.

The men laid the heiress of Castle Grand upon the rude pallet and departed.

The girl's fate was now in King Reginald's hands.

The old woman secured the massive door behind them and crouched down before the fire upon a wood cricket.

Matilda sat upright and pushed back from her wild eyes and white face her loosened hair.

"Am I in the king's castle?" Matilda asked, in an agitated whisper.

"Ay, lady, in the dungeons of Castle Rushen," answered the old woman, with a grim, hard smile.

"It was the king who had me brought here?" said Matilda, in that same whisper.

"Ay, lady. He bade me say to you that you shall go hence as his wife, or your bones shall bleach upon this dungeon-stone. Death or marriage with the king! This is your fate!"

"But you are a woman!" cried Matilda, springing up and kneeling at the old crone's feet.

"You have a heart to pity one of your own sex. And I am a nun, vowed to Heaven. See my robe! Help me to go free, and I will bless you while I live. I will pray for you till I die!"

A horrible leer disfigured the old woman's countenance.

"You might as well plead to a stone as to plead to me, lady," she said. "I will help the king—not you!"

"The king—when will he be here?"

"His majesty means to give you a week of solitude before he intrudes upon you. He will not come under a week—unless you send for him sooner!" and again the old creature leered insultingly.

"And you will not help me to escape? You will not have pity on me?"

"Not I. I will help the king, lady. You can be a queen if you like. Pity yourself and yield to his majesty, but ask pity and help of these stones around us sooner than of me!"

Matilda staggered to her feet and flung her hands wildly above her head.

"Can a woman be so pitiless to a woman?" she groaned. Oh, deserted by all the world, in the hands of my unscrupulous enemy, may Heaven have pity upon me and let me die!"

(To be Continued.)

PLASTER OF PARIS.

PLASTER of Paris may be made to set very quick by mixing it in warm water to which a little sulphate of potash has been added. Plaster of Paris casts, soaked in melted paraffine, may be readily cut or turned in a lathe. They may be rendered very hard and tough by soaking them in warm glue size until thoroughly saturated, and allowing them to dry.

Plaster of Paris mixed with equal parts of powdered pumice stone makes a fine mould for casting fusible metals; the same mixture is useful for incasing articles to be soldered or brazed. Casts of plaster of Paris may be made to imitate fine bronzes by giving them two or three coats of shellac varnish, and dusting on fine bronze powder when the mastic varnish becomes sticky.

Rat holes may be effectually stopped with broken glass and plaster of Paris. The best method of mixing plaster of Paris is to sprinkle it into the water, using rather more water than is required for the batter; when the plaster settles pour off the surplus water and stir carefully. Air bubbles are avoided in this way.

A CANADIAN correspondent says there are some 250,000 head of cattle and 500,000 sheep at present being stall-fed in the province of Ontario for shipment to British ports in the spring.

ACCORDING to the report of a commission appointed to inquire into the herring fishery, Scotch gannets consume 1,110,000,000 herrings per annum. It is also calculated that codfish and its congeners consume about 20,400,000,000 per annum. Compared with these birds and fishes man makes a poor figure in taking the herring. Upon an average the number of herrings caught by fishermen is estimated at 843,250,800 per annum, a very thin show compared with the long figures given above.

REMARKABLE SALT DEPOSITS.

Recent borings made in different parts of North Germany have proved beyond denial that the assertion made by several eminent geologists, that a mighty deposit of salt stretches from the Lüneburger Heide to the coast of the Baltic, is perfectly correct. The deposit begins near Lüneburg, passes underneath the Elbe, and extends right across the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg. Another branch goes in the direction of the Duchy of Holstein via Legeberg to Elmshorn and Heide. Borings made at Lübbchen, near Hagenow, by order of the Mecklenburg Government, have now reached a depth of 456 metres, and the thickness of the deposit of salt now reaches 130 metres; the basis, however, is not yet reached.

FRINGED WITH FIRE.

By the Author of "Bound to the Trawl," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Loo," etc.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG THE ROSES.

The stately homes of England.
How beautiful they stand!
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
O'er this pleasant land.

A FINE old Tudor mansion was Wardour Hall, and the long avenue of stately elms leading up to its principal entrance looked like giant soldiers drawn up in martial array to do honour to its owners and their guests.

Certainly a home to be proud of. One that no man in his senses would recklessly fling away, or would bring a mistress to rule over that should be unworthy of her lofty destiny. Judith Henen, as she leaned back in the carriage, looked at the mighty elms, and inhaled the odours from trees and flowers and caught a glimpse of the massive structure she and her mother were approaching, and felt that she would have been quite content to forego the more brilliant destiny her mother had promised her, and make an exchange with her cousin, Florence, who was pretty sure one day to call this place her home.

For Judith was rather a sceptical young lady with regard to her mother's power over others, and she did not believe she would be able to influence the destiny of either Arthur Wardour or Florence Edgecombe, and yet as to her ability to mould her own future she was very much more sanguine, though she could not have explained why.

"But for all she can say a bird in hand is worth two in the bush," she soliloquised, "and I should be very well satisfied to have such a home as this."

Her reflections were cut short by the termination of the avenue of elms, the barking of dogs, a more extended view of the Hall, and the appearance of a man-servant, who took their cards and ushered them into the entrance hall.

Judith looked about her; she had never been here before, and though she had been a guest in more magnificent houses—thanks to her mother's good management—she had never seen one that so interested and fascinated her more.

The hall in which they stood, was oblong in shape, but at the further end from the entrance two men in armour seemed to stand ready to bar further progress, while swords, muskets, pistols, and firearms of every description, shape and age, with horns of buffaloes heads and antlers of deer and other trophies of the chase from many foreign lands, adorned the walls.

Skins of tigers, lions, bears, and antelopes were spread about on the floor, the glass eyes in the stuffed heads of the two former looking somewhat uncomfortable as they seemed to glare up from the floor in the dimly lighted hall.

With a start, Judith found she had twice

been spoken to, and that her mother was several paces in advance, following a servant into a room that led out of the central hall, and so with a hurried step she joined her.

The servant left them, and Judith looked round in still greater surprise. What a contrast this room was to the formidable-looking entrance hall.

The three windows opened upon a stone terrace, which gave access to a lawn, broken here and there with beds of brightly coloured flowers, while the very paths were of soft, velvety grass of an emerald green. A lake at the bottom of the lawn, with overhanging willows on its banks and many rare waterfowl upon its surface, gave a sense of coolness and beauty to the scene which made the girl sigh from very envy.

Reluctantly she turned away to reply to some remark from her mother, and then she observed that the ottomans and chairs, curtains and other furniture of the apartment were all of the palest, most delicate French-white brocade, so that the room, with its rich lace hangings and drapery, looked as though it had been prepared for a bride.

"Only I should have liked more colour in it if it had been for me," she thought, "but it would suit Florence to a shade."

At this moment, however, the door opened and the lady of the house made her appearance. A tall, handsome, stately woman, who carried herself with all the dignity of a queen; a grand old lady with abundant silvery hair, a fresh, bright complexion and dark brown, almost black, eyes, beneath brows still dark, as in the days of her youth. She came towards Judith and her mother, making them both seem more diminutive than usual by comparison, and taking the hand of the latter, she bent and kissed her, saying:

"I am so glad you have come, my dear; many years have passed since we last met."

"Yes, but I could not resist your letter," replied Mrs. Henen, "it awakened many old memories, opened old wounds perhaps, but I am here to see if I can help you. First let me present to you my daughter Judith."

Mrs. Wardour greeted the girl kindly, but Judith mentally decided she did not like her, and she thought if Arthur in any way resembled his mother, Florence was not to be envied so very much after all.

A little further conversation, during which Mrs. Wardour invited her visitors to remain to luncheon, and gave orders for the entertainment of the driver of the fly and his horse; and then turning to Judith she asked, rather pointedly, it seemed to that young lady, whether she would not like to go into the garden and help herself to flowers or fruit while her mother and she talked of "auld lang syne."

But Judith was not inclined to be inquisitive. She not only believed, but put in constant practice the maxim that "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," and she had more than once in her life found cause to congratulate herself upon knowing absolutely nothing about things which it would have been very uncomfortable at certain times to have been acquainted with.

So now she accepted the suggestion readily enough, and opening one of the French windows, she walked out on the terrace and down to the lawn, and then wandered about from flower to flower like a bee gathering honey, until her hands were full of roses, and then she went down by the lake, seeking some shady spot where she could sit down to arrange her trophies.

Under a weeping ash she found exactly what she wanted—a very comfortable American chair, and on this she seated herself, spreading the flowers on her lap, and arranging them in a bouquet, too intent upon her occupation to look around or to be conscious that she was not alone. Here companion—if a man can be said to be the companion of a person of whose proximity he is unconscious—was a young man of some four or five and twenty.

He was lying back in a chair similar to the one on which Judith had seated herself. A book was in his hand, though he was not read-

ing it. His head was uncovered, and the soft summer breeze just lifted the locks of bright chestnut hair which waved in thick masses about his head, and looked unfashionably long, but yet suited well a face that spoke of birth as well as of beauty, and accorded with the firmly cut mouth that was softened and half-shaded by the moustache which curled foppishly at the corners; his chin being closely shaven. In a tone too low to reach Judith's ears, he was murmuring to himself:

From east to western Ind, no jewel is like Rosalinde.

"Shakespeare was right," he went on; "there is no woman in the world like my Rosalinde. Mine, I say; ah, I wish it were really so. I have so much to conceal, and I am not even sure of her love; and yet I call her mine. Idiot that I am; but I will never wed another woman, that I swear. Rosalinde shall be my wife, or I will have none."

Then he sprang to his feet, but the soft grass gave forth no sound, and at this moment Judith, who had certainly helped herself freely to the queen of the flowers, and had roses in her lap of pale pink and white and yellow and deep damask red, began to sing in a low, soft tone:

Gather the rose-buds while ye may,

Old time will still be flying;

And this same flower which blooms to-day,

To-morrow will be dying.

"A doleful ditty, fair lady. Do you know you have been guilty of high treason?"

And as these words fell upon her ears, Judith Henen sprang to her feet, dropping all her floral treasures, and looking at the young man in unfeigned surprise, as she exclaimed:

"How you frightened me. I thought I was alone."

"So thought I until you began that melancholy melody. I have been sitting over yonder sleeping or dreaming for the last hour."

"And I have been here about a quarter of that time," returned the girl. "I had no idea that anyone was in the garden but myself."

"So I should imagine," and he glanced at the fallen flowers. "You can know nothing about this place, or of the sceptre that governs Wardour Hall, or you would never have touched one of those sacred roses," solemnly.

"Nonsense! Mrs. Wardour told me to help myself to flowers and fruit, and I have only half fulfilled her injunction. Do you know where the fruit is? for I couldn't find it."

"Yes," with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, for he thought Judith very much more of a child than she really was, and he felt amused to think how his aunt's politeness was to be taken literally by this miss of sixteen, for he never imagined her to be more.

"Then I wish you'd show me," said Judith, with a smile, which showed her white teeth; "but I must pick up my roses first; it was partly your fault they fell."

"Then I'll help you, but mind I'm not responsible for plucking them; the roses here are more prized than the family jewels, so you may imagine what you have done."

"I don't mind exchanging them for the family jewels," was the saucy retort, "though I suppose my cousin would object to that. You are not Arthur Wardour, are you?"

"No; I am his cousin."

"Ah! I heard he had gone to London," Judith went on, thoughtfully.

Then, abruptly looking at her companion, she asked:

"Would you like to know who I am?"

"I confess to being slightly curious," he replied, with a smile. "You must be a very wonderful young lady, to be made free of the rose garden."

"Indeed, I am not. You know why Arthur Wardour has gone away, don't you?"

"Yes"—reluctantly.

"Then I am the young lady's cousin."

"Good heavens! And is she at all like you?"

"No, not a bit. Lucky for her, isn't it? You needn't tax your inventive faculties for compliments, I know it. Florence is tall and fair and

handsome, and all that kind of thing, and your aunt and my mother are up there plotting against the lovers; that's why I am not afraid to pick the roses."

"Yes; but is it possible my aunt can be so mean?"

"If you ask my opinion, I should say that that old lady was capable of anything to gain her own ends. But, come, I may not get another chance, and I am so fond of strawberries."

And Judith gathered up her flowers, and expressed her readiness to accompany him.

"Poor Arthur," said the young man. "I suppose nothing can be done to help him."

"No," slowly drawled the girl; "if you meet him you might warn him not to believe anything that Florence doesn't tell him herself; but I don't think those cats will succeed," with a nod in the direction of the mansion; "my cousin is a very resolute young woman, and she will no doubt have a large fortune when her uncle dies; so no great harm can come to them."

"I hope not, I am sure."

Then the young man fell into a train of thought, in which the change in his own opinions took a prominent part.

"How was it that six months ago he had thought his cousin Arthur foolish and undutiful in determining to marry contrary to the will of his parents, and that now his sympathies were all the other way, and he was ready to help him and the girl of his choice to the utmost of his power."

The explanation was simple enough. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, and Jack Chester—by courtesy, Viscount Rookford—was himself a victim to the tender passion, only his case was far worse than that of his cousin, for Rosalinde Grayling, according to all the ordinary canons of society, was not even a lady.

He had struggled against the passion, reasoned against it, sought forgetfulness in change of scene and company, had even wooed oblivion by sunning himself in the light of other eyes; but all in vain. The passion had taken hold of him, and though he had not confessed his love to the object of it, or confided his agony and weakness to anyone, he felt that life without Rosalinde would be utterly worthless and insipid—nay, that it would be intolerable.

Thinking thus—unconscious of the dark cloud of crime and misery that was gathering upon his house, with him for its central victim—he led the way to the hothouses and kitchen gardens, where the fruit Judith coveted was to be found.

Here the head gardener stood, and he stared in dumb surprise, not unmixed with indignation, at the magnificent roses Judith carried in her hand; but he made no verbal comment, and, on the young man requesting him to point out the finest and ripest fruit, he merely touched his hat and replied, sulkily:

"Yes, my lord."

"My lord," thought Judith; "I wonder if this is the young man whom my mother intends shall marry me. If so, I'm in luck. I can fall in love with him at once, and then my young affections can be thrown into the account. Heigho, Judith! but there is the luncheon gong," she said, aloud.

It was, and the two young people so strangely introduced walked together towards the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. HENEN WINS A POINT.

The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.

"I see you appreciate my roses," remarked Mrs. Wardour, with a smile that was meant to be kind and polite, but that was in point of fact grim and resentful.

"Yes," replied Judith, serenely; "you told me to help myself, and I did so liberally, and I must say I never saw a finer show of flowers in my life."

"It is kind of you to say so, but I believe

my roses are exceptionally rare. You can put them in that vase till you leave."

Then the stately dame led the way to the dining-room with Mrs. Henen at her side, and the young man and Judith in her wake. In the dining-room they found Mr. Wardour, a man of some fifty years, short and stout, with a rubicund face, reddish hair, and the general appearance, dress and manner, of a well-to-do farmer rather than that of a country gentleman and squire of the parish.

A complete contrast to his wife, he yielded to her on most subjects, and when she introduced her visitors to him he shook them cordially by the hand, and declared himself glad to see them.

"Your son?" asked Mrs. Henen, glancing at the young man who had walked in from the garden with her daughter.

"No, my nephew, Lord Rookford."

This introduction was made reluctantly; or rather, Judith fancied it was; also, she noticed a strange gleam in her mother's eyes when the name was uttered, and she distinctly saw her purposely let fall her pocket-handkerchief and stoop to pick it up again, in order, probably, to hide her face, or to afford an excuse for the sudden change that came over it.

Lord Rookford himself took but slight notice of the little old woman, and had he thought of her at all—which he did not—it would have been to liken her to a wicked fairy whom he would much rather not have as a god-mother. He did not admire Judith, but she was young like himself, and bright and amusing, and before he met her he had found the morning hang heavily upon his hands, and his visit at the Hall, short as it was to be, rather a bore.

"I used to know your father," remarked Mrs. Henen, when luncheon was nearly over; and looking blandly at the viscount. "He is well, I hope?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"He has been abroad for several years, I believe?" was the next question.

"Yes. He and my mother have been travelling for some time past," was the reply.

"And they have not yet returned to England?" asked the female inquisitor.

"They will be here to-night; that is why you find me here this morning. My people are going to live at a place we have some ten miles away. It has been shut up for a long time, and I wanted to get it ready for them, but my mother has a fancy for arranging everything for herself, so we shall avail ourselves of my aunt's hospitality for a few days."

"There!" was his mental exclamation; "she can't ask me any more questions after that, surely!"

But he was mistaken; he could tell her exactly what she wanted to know, and more than that, she knew of no other source from whence she could gain the required information, so she persistently returned to the charge.

"Rookford Towers has been shut up for several years, hasn't it?" she inquired.

"Yes; only a few servants have remained there since my parents went abroad."

"Is it true that it is haunted?" was the next question, which made her daughter stare and the young man laugh.

"Haunted!" he repeated; "no, I fear not. I don't think our family possesses such a respectable adjunct as a ghost; but I can tell you more positively when I have lived at Rookford myself, for up to the present time I have not once slept in the house."

"Really?"

"No; I scarcely know how it has happened, but that is the case. I never remember to have spent one night at Rookford." Then turning to Judith, he asked: "Do you believe in ghosts, Miss Henen?"

"No; I believe in nothing more unsubstantial than myself," was the answer. "Do you, Mrs. Wardour?"

But the face of their hostess was white and drawn as though she were trying to suppress some spasm of pain, and she replied, in a hard, strained voice:

"No," while, already she began to regret that

she had sent for her once dear friend, and still more that she had invited her and her daughter to come and stay at the Hall before they returned to London.

Rather early to begin to wish she had not plotted against her son's happiness, and sought to avail herself of the aid of such a tool as Mrs. Henen, for if she feels like that now, what will be her thoughts and sensations when the weapon she has sought to use against others wounds her own hand?

Playing with edged tools is a dangerous game, more dangerous than Mrs. Wardour as yet realises. But the meal is over. Mr. Wardour suggests to his nephew a visit to the stables, and the ladies are left alone.

"My dear friend has invited us to come and stay here a short time, Judith, before we return to town," observed Mrs. Henen, "shall we accept it for next week, or just before we intend to leave Worcester?"

"Just as you like, mamma," was the dutiful reply.

"We could go in and see your cousin very often, couldn't we?" suggested the wily old woman.

"Yes; and Jasmine Cottage is so small," with a laugh, "that I do not want to be boxed up there longer than I can help."

"Then we will come next Monday—to-day is Friday—will that suit you, my dear?" to Mrs. Wardour.

"Yes, if my brother and his wife have left by that time. I had forgotten their promised visit, and even that my nephew was actually staying here, when I spoke. You would scarcely like to meet his father and mother, I think."

"Why not, my dear?" and the old woman—for she looked far older than her years—indulged in a hearty laugh. "You don't think that a feeling that was crushed to death more than five-and-twenty years ago can affect me now, do you? On the contrary, I should like to renew my old friendship with the Earl of Crayeforth; he was plain Mr. Chester when I knew him; his wife was a Marion Grey, believe."

"Yes, but we have not many spare bedrooms, and I think if you could defer your visit—" speaking with hesitation.

But Mrs. Henen interrupted her cheerfully.

"Oh, you can put Judith and me both in one room, if you like, but you must not rob me of the pleasure of meeting your brother again after all these years. I must beg of you, dear, as a favour, to grant me the gratification of this whim, then I shall think my visit to Worcester-shire most charming, and any trouble I may take for my friends amply repaid."

Mrs. Wardour understood the hint, so did Judith too for that matter, but this innocent young lady was intently studying the portraits of dead and gone Wardours that adorned or disfigured the walls of the dining-room.

She had no doubt as to the result of the struggle between the tall woman with her passionate imperious temper, her pride of birth, and still greater pride of power, and the small, dark, witch-like creature whom she herself called mother, and whose cunning and subtlety, she knew, were more than a match for the other's strength.

But she did not wish to prejudice her hostess against herself, by seeming to be conscious that any tie, besides the memory of past friendship, bound that lady to her mother; therefore she left them to—as she mentally termed it—"fight it out between themselves," and busied herself with other things.

One fact she was already beginning to realise, and it was that she would often have to seem to be both very deaf and very blind, if she meant to play the part to perfection that her mother had assigned to her.

Innocence to the verge of ignorance and stupidity, obedience to the utmost limit of slavish fear, were what her parent had imposed upon her. The first, it was possible, she might assume, but the second—Judith shook her head when she thought of it, but she kept her doubts to herself, reasoning, sagely enough, that at least she could try.

Her mother's voice recalled her from her



[PRECIOUS ROSES.]

study of the portraits of Arthur Wardour's ancestors, and she turned and followed the two ladies into the hall, whence they strolled out into the garden.

"I am afraid you will find it very dull when you come to stay here," Mrs. Wardour remarked to the girl, as they walked over the velvety lawn. "That is," she added, "unless you ride. In that case my husband will be glad of your company, for he misses his son greatly," with a sigh.

"Oh, yes, I am very fond of riding," said Judith, brightly. "I brought down my habit with me, though as the hunting season is past, I scarcely hoped to have occasion for wearing it."

"Then you and my husband are sure to be good friends; only he will expect you to be interested in his dogs and horses, his game and his crops, to such an extent, that I am very much afraid he will weary you."

"There is no chance of that, I delight in a country life. If I may feed the poultry and the water-fowl, and run about the gardens and farmyard and park as though I were at home, I shall be as happy as possible, and perhaps I may be able to amuse you and Mr. Wardour sometimes."

"I never want amusement, child," in a mournful tone. "My flowers and the duties of my position give me occupation, and I want nothing more. Besides," as a kind of afterthought, "while you are here I shall also have your mother."

"Yes, that is true, and you and mamma will have so many things to talk about that it will be delightful. Ah, here come the gentlemen."

Thus the conversation that was drifting into a mocking, satirical vein was interrupted, and Miss Judith now set herself to the task of charming, or at any rate making friends with the squire. Not a difficult matter, for Squire Wardour was a neglected man. His wife, whom he had once loved dearly, and of whose beauty and dignity he was so proud, was always cold and reserved, and sometimes even repellant in her

manner towards him, so that in time all the warmth of his affectionate nature came to be poured out upon his only son.

But a son was not what he had longed and hoped for in the early days of his married life. An heir to his ancient name and broad acres was, of course, both desirable and welcome, but the man would have liked a daughter—ay, half-a-dozen daughters rather than have been without any.

They would have softened his wife's heart and manner, he thought; have tempered her pride, and would have been to himself companions whom he could have kept always near him, and who would not have had to go away to school and college as had been the case with his boy Arthur, who for this reason had not been such a solace to his father as a girl might have been.

But few of us get all we want in this world, and Squire Wardour was no exception to the universal lot of mankind. A more restless man, or a man more imbued with a sense of his own importance would have broken through the frosty crust which his wife managed to spread over everything around him. He would have sought other companions and more congenial society.

Mr. Wardour, however, had neither the spirit nor the inclination for this, therefore he submitted to be ruled and chilled, amusing himself as best he could by looking after his estate, taking an active part in country sports, and performing the duties which his position in the county entailed upon him.

Thus it was that when he heard that his wife had invited this dark, but bright-faced girl and her mother on a visit of indefinite length at the Hall, he welcomed the idea cordially, and returning to the stables with the whole party at once, pointed out a beautiful brown mare which she should ride.

"You must give me a mount, uncle," laughed Lord Rookford, when he saw Judith's delight. "I can't get to London for a time," with a sigh, "and I haven't got my horses down

yet. What a pity Arthur is away, isn't it? We should be quite a jolly party."

"Ah, poor Arthur!"

It was the father who spoke. He would have forgiven his son for marrying a dairymaid, rather than have had him leave home to work for an independence. But it was Mrs. Wardour who was inexorable. That she, the sister of an earl, should have a son who would act so utterly at variance with her wishes as to marry a girl without family, wealth or position, when a charming woman with every desirable qualification was only waiting like over-ripe fruit to fall into his arms, was not only unintelligible but unpardonable, and she hardened her heart against him, and refused to listen to any terms save those of unconditional submission to her will.

But the hired carriage is waiting to take Mrs. and Miss Henen back to Worcester, and with cordial adieus, and a promise that they will return on Monday, Judith and her mother, the former carrying off her roses in triumph, are driven down the long, stately avenue with the exultant consciousness in the hearts of both that their visit has been a grand success.

"How do you like Lord Rookford?" asked the elder woman, when they had proceeded some distance in silence.

"Oh, very well indeed," was the reply, while the small face suddenly hid itself amidst the handful of glorious roses.

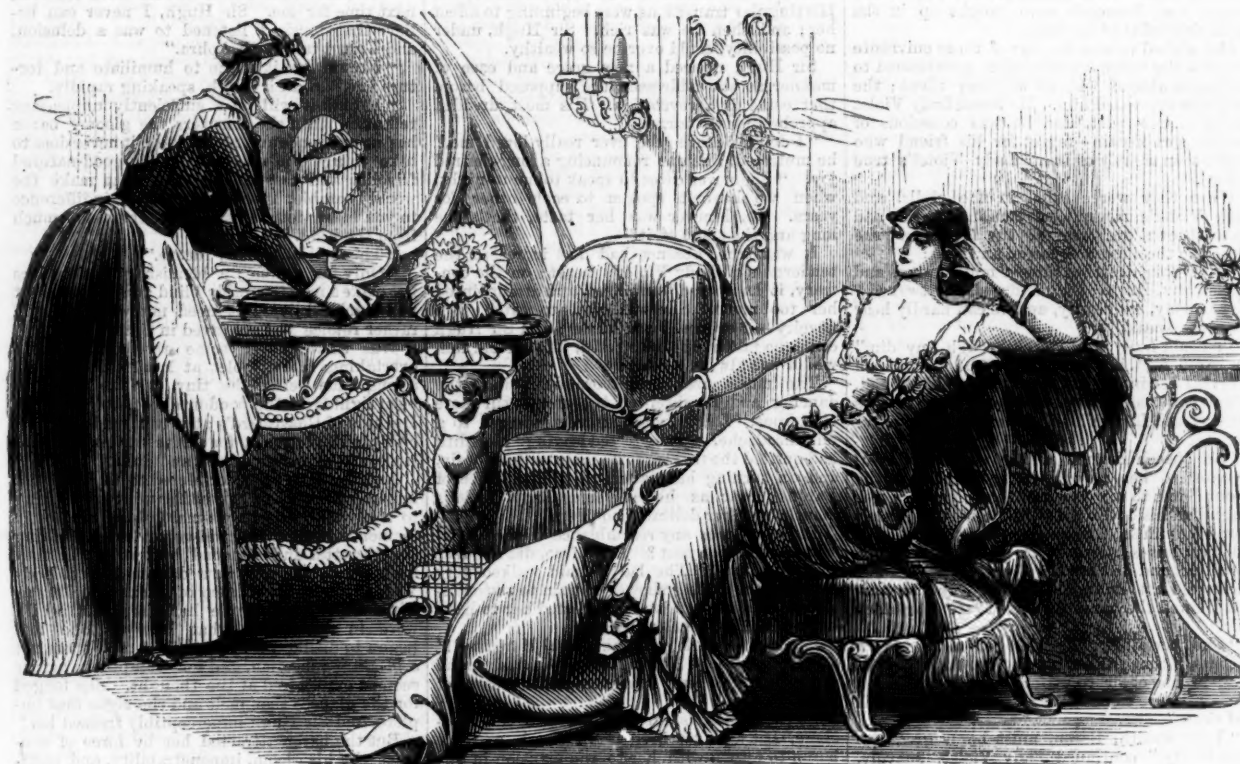
"That is satisfactory. He is the man I spoke of. Obedience on your part won't be difficult, I fancy."

"No, mamma; it might be very much worse, but I should like to know—"

"You will know nothing. Ask no questions; it will be your safest and most comfortable plan, and above all, say as little as possible to Florence."

A brief assent and the girl leaned back in her corner. She was rather sorry for Florence, but at the same time she envied her.

(To be Continued.)



[A SPOILT BEAUTY.]

LADY VIOLET'S VICTIMS.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"SHALL JUSTICE BE DONE?"

And when music arose, with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes spake love to eyes that spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell.

THERE was fresh animation in Lionel's expression as the two friends sauntered through the avenue on their return journey; he looked like a man who, after recovering from the effects of a severe shock, calls on his expiring energies to assist him in rallying anew to the combat.

Sir Hugh had been delighted with his reception by Lady Violet. She was softer and more genuine in her ways. He thought her old sarcastic haughtiness had changed. She was less difficult to please, kinder and more considerate. But what was the meaning of Lionel's changed colour and abstraction?

He had been pale as he entered the hall, but now dark crimson flushed his bronzed cheek, and all Sir Hugh's allusions to Lady Violet were answered in a vague and unsatisfactory manner, like a man in a dream.

"Why, Baron, has your new role transformed you into a visionary?" asked Sir Hugh, lightly. "What on earth has changed you so suddenly? You've twice answered 'no' when you meant 'yes,' and admired a deepening twilight when we're not much more advanced than three o'clock."

Lionel smiled as he said:

"A strange thing has happened, Sir Hugh. If I were at all disposed to a love of the mysterious, I should say one's thoughts could conjure sounds at will. I declare I can't forget it."

"Perhaps some Æolian harp has been playing for your amusement."

"I distinctly heard the notes of a song I wrote years ago."

"Tunes do resemble each other uncommonly," answered Sir Hugh, dubiously; "now I always connect 'Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming,' with part of 'Here stands a post, 'tis a signal not a snare,' but then that's my want of ear."

"I wish I could understand how I came to hear that song," Lionel went on, thoughtfully. "I was not exactly thinking of—of her at that moment, but of you and your possibilities of happiness, when crossing the hall I distinctly heard the notes I had written, but no voice accompanied them, and soon the music ceased."

"You'll very likely be treated to the 'Dead March in Saul' next time," said Sir Hugh, treating the affair as a joke. "I knew all sorts of mysterious signs would attack you at the Hall, mere tricks of the imagination; why we shall have you next setting up as a revealing spirit of the Basingstoke Brethren, and declaring, as I heard one fellow say with true astronomical intelligence, that all the old moons go to build the new Jerusalem."

"I must confess, Sir Hugh, I dislike the task you have imposed on me—this appearing in a fictitious character. Suppose the Baron vanishes entirely and for ever off the scene?"

"But the dance on the twentieth? Oh, come, you must be present. Violet has set her heart on it. After that you may return to Moldavia again, and we will invite you to the wedding."

It was growing dusk as the two friends returned to the hotel. Lionel retired to his own room to think, dominated by some strange influence that was beginning seriously to affect him.

He wanted to assure himself whether Lady Constance really ceased to exist. He longed to enter the mausoleum of the Earl of Harrington, and again touch the smooth-edged coffin, which after all neither he nor Sir Hugh Allerton had ever really seen laid to rest.

Who had played that weird and touching melody? It had wrought a transformation already in Lionel's breast, like a tempest-tossed mariner who sees a beacon light miles away along

an ice-bound coast, knowing it will be swept from his gaze by the breakers.

But no, think as he might, he dared not cherish the monstrous fallacy that his wife lived, and yet the same longing to pierce the mystery enshrouding his birth, that had died out of his breast when he believed Lady Constance was no more, again declared itself.

He would seek Aphra on the morrow, and try different means this time to induce her to reveal the truth—nay, he would pay Darratt the price named for the purchase of that secret, the absence of the knowledge of which seemed like a shutting out of life, an extinguisher on enterprise.

He had not long to indulge in speculation, for after he had changed his clothes, Sir Hugh, in full evening dress, again sought him, and after dinner and a severe shaking in a hansom cab, they found themselves at the doors of the theatre, and to their extreme surprise, saw Lady Violet—yes, and Meredith, alight from the Duchess of Chastelard's carriage almost at the same time as themselves. Sir Hugh hurried forward.

"My dear Violet, this is a surprise. Why when could you have arrived in town?"

"About an hour ago. I received a letter from the Duchess by the early post, in which she sent us stall tickets. I forgot to tell you, indeed I hardly felt inclined to go at all, only the afternoon seemed so long after you had left."

And her beautiful eyes rested on Lionel's face with a half timid smile. The Baron recollecting his part, glanced aside.

"I have sent my maid away."

"Indeed?"

This from the baron, who had seen Meredith pass into the pit, and draw down her veil so as not to be perceived.

"Ah! an excellent creature, so devoted. Shall we pass on to our stalls, Sir Hugh?"

Sir Hugh managed to secure two stall tickets in exchange for the box. Lady Violet always looked superb by gaslight. She wore a pale green-coloured satin dress, trimmed with

Malines lace. A diamond necklet graced her throat, and diamonds were caught up in the glistening folds of her hair.

She wished to pass for one of those enivrante beauties the baron was doubtless accustomed to subjugate abroad. Lionel was very silent; the moments oppressed him. He found Lady Violet acting a new part, and he was conscious of another sort of pain—regret for his friend who might soon rightly estimate Lady Violet's true nature.

When they were seated in the stalls, and Lady Violet's magnificent fur-lined cloak had been thrown over one of the fauteuils, she turned to the supposed baron, and said:

"How this wretched music must annoy and disgust you, Baron; isn't it dreadfully twangy? No harmony, no beauty, and we can hardly hear ourselves speak."

"I could hear your voice through any din," the baron said, recollecting that he had sworn to reveal her in her true colours to his friend. A man can easily divine when a woman implies flattery, and Lady Violet's manner had seductive homage.

This speech opened a long vista of playful reveries to her ladyship, the accent on the "your" was to say the least encouraging. Sir Hugh had his opera glass fixed on a promising young lady in salmon-coloured tights, and with golden plumes rising from her well-powdered shoulders, and had not heard these asides. Lady Violet did not immediately reply, only sighed, and allowed the baron to investigate her black hair.

"She certainly has the shoulders of a duchess," thought Sir Hugh, throwing himself back in his chair to admire his bride elect; "she was sure to be ambitious with such a neck and brow."

"Your wealth, Baron, must be a great responsibility," continued Lady Violet, suavely. "How can you manage to get through your income?"

"What is wealth without it is shared? Wealth! bah! I often wish I was poor and had to toil like a serf, eat sour cucumber and black bread."

"You speak like all men of wealth—wearily and disdainfully of their possessions," she said, compassionately.

"Of course he does, Violet," here Sir Hugh put in briskly; "he is sighing to be loved, to find a congenial soul."

The baron took out his cambric handkerchief, innocent of perfume, and wafted it gently in the air.

"It is true, it is indeed true, I want a new experience," answered the baron, "and this longing seizes me like the disease of genius attacks others—all stale, flat, and unprofitable. I have gambled till I felt all around me a fiery and burning mirage of miserable delusion. I have studied till every intellectual activity has been literally palsied with thought—but pardon what may strike you as callousness, I cannot love, and love is the real joy. If I could only be bruised, crushed, trampled upon, or enchanted."

The baron delivered this sentence feebly, pausing a little between each word. Lady Violet thought he could be jealous on occasions, but the baron was looking at that dark-eyed woman in the pit—Meredith, whose influence had been so fatally exercised in his past, and who sat before him veiled and silent like a character of doom.

"You do not seem particularly interested in the piece, Baron?" continued Lady Violet.

When he said, "I don't care in the least for the ballet," it was as if a Sultan had startled her by declaring he studied domestic economy, and knew whether poultry paid.

"You will not forget our dance on the twentieth—a simple affair. My father has a great aversion to loud display of any kind."

Lionel felt a disgusted sense of his own false assumption, and wished himself back in Australia; and yet, if he could convince his friend of Lady Violet's real nature! Lady Violet felt a vague alarm at the baron's sudden change of

manner, and wondered if she had offended him. His singular transitions were beginning to affect her; and then he was rich. Sir Hugh, under no possibility, could ever be so wealthy.

Sir Hugh noticed a new grace and ease of manner as she addressed the supposed baron, that came as a revelation. His most, dreaded apprehensions returned.

"I don't believe she ever really loved me," he muttered, like one renouncing a long-desired joy. "She never cares to speak to me to-night, when we haven't spoken to each other for years. No, I never was her taste, that's the long and the short of it."

It was true, absence had not increased the tenderness of Lady Violet's heart; on the contrary, it had bored, tantalised, and disappointed her too much. She was glad to catch at a novelty—at even a Baron Mirar; and Sir Hugh could be taken up or rejected, like an old fan, which was always a comfort.

The music grew still more deafening; the dancing and laughter on the stage still more boisterous. Lady Violet, rising, confessed to a mild headache, and suggested leaving. Meredith had quitted the theatre some minutes previously, and on turning had taken particular notice of Baron Mirar as he adjusted Lady Violet's mantle over her delicate shoulders.

Did she trace any resemblance to the Lionel Hargrave of the past? And if so, did she fear his vengeance? The lady's-maid walked very rapidly in a pelting shower of rain to the mansion in which her mistress expected her to have been located several hours ago.

"Is it possible it could be Lionel Hargrave?" she murmured. "No, no, impossible. My mind must be weak and wandering to dream of that."

As the duchess's carriage drove to the kerbstone, Lady Violet invited Sir Hugh and the baron to return with her to the mansion in the West-end square in which she was staying. They saw her into the carriage, but declined her offer to accompany her home. Sir Hugh felt painfully jaded and dispirited. The baron had received a whispered sanction to address Lady Violet as a lover.

Was it prudent on her ladyship's part to forget "it is well to be off with the old love before you are on with the new?" Prudence does not invariably rule women's actions. She felt tired, bored, distraite; she took a new resolve in a sudden fit of desperation. But nothing as yet was clearly defined. All was implied, but nothing spoken. Lionel said nothing to Sir Hugh of the capricious change in the woman he had loved. He was startled at this extraordinary revelation of feminine inconsistency and frivolity. But how could the baron address her? Merely through glances and hand pressures, and this apparent hanging back on his part increased her enthusiasm. Lionel heartily wished from the first he had refused the assumed title Sir Hugh had given him; it was entirely foreign to his tastes and principles. As they drove to the hotel, Sir Hugh broke a somewhat painful silence by saying:

"Who would believe a woman could be so false? I watched her closely; she never could have cared for me."

"No, I don't believe she ever did," replied Lionel, gravely; "you were too much after the cut and pattern of the others who besieged her. A strange woman, and now she has no heart left to care for any. She prefers me simply because I am different from you, and believes I am wealthy."

"It is hard," muttered Sir Hugh, crushing his face down on his hands, "to have waited only for this, but she will live and die alone."

"No; you are mistaken; but do not judge her too harshly; we will see what the dance on the twentieth will reveal. I don't wish my arrival on the scene to take the form of a demon-visit as far as you are concerned, but you would force the role on me against my will, and I now have a fierce longing impossible to gain-stay to visit the hall once more ere quitting England for ever."

Sir Hugh asked almost breathlessly:

"Why?"

"To hear what the invisibles have reserved next time for me. Sir Hugh, I never can believe that music I listened to was a delusion, and I must talk with Aphra."

"I could find it in me to humiliate and torture her," said Sir Hugh, speaking rapidly.

"I think it will be a sufficiently unpleasant reflection when she discovers the gloomy baron has no existence and no banker; it never does to take things too much to heart; good-natured frivolity and easy dulness are what make the world bearable. I tried to prove her indifference to you in her letters; she wrote them too much from the head."

"This will blight my future."

"Only for a time; a blemish of vision does not make a man incurably blind; disappointment will touch all lives; it need not wither them; rather rejoice you are saved in time."

Was there indeed some retributive justice overtaking Lady Violet at last? She sat for a long time before the tiny gas fire that had been lighted in the boudoir allotted to her at the Duchess of Chastelard's; the rain made her feel chilly, and the room, for all its tasteful decorations, struck her as dreary and dull.

And then she rang for Meredith to brush out her long brown hair as was her wont ere retiring to rest. And the lady's-maid placed the costly diamonds in their crimson-velvet cases, shaking the aigrettes and diamond butterflies till they flashed like meteors in a darkened sky. Lady Violet took up a romance of Alexandre Dumas with which to beguile her thoughts, which were in truth somewhat heavy. She had begun to dislike Sir Hugh Allerton. It was not a pleasant reflection, and her voluptuous nature seemed embittered at the thought. She longed for the glances that melt and the sighs that implore, and Sir Hugh imperceptibly froze her.

But the baron attracted her by force of contrast; by his gloom, impenetrability, and indifference, besides that "pleasing dread" which Lady Violet had sometimes read of, and which lends itself readily to any highly-coloured history of terror. But Sir Hugh was her affianced husband; he had even named the wedding day, and in the event of the baron's disloyalty he was always something to fall back upon, like a comfortable arm-chair in place of costly bric-à-brac.

Lady Violet felt, however, unmistakably out of temper. She dashed the brush from Meredith's hand in a fit of fury—as if she were a Roman princess and Meredith a slave—making the lady's-maid conscious of a strong desire to give notice, and change the languishing sense of monotony that so often attacked her at the Hall, for a wider, freer life abroad.

As her ladyship, in her pale blue satin peignoir, her dainty feet encased in black velvet, gold-buckled shoes, rolled her luxuriant hair into a large knot at the back of her head, a pale gleam of anger in her expression, lips compressed, and brows bent, Meredith, gently dangling the brush over the back of the chair, was assailed with that hatred of all things, both animate and inanimate, only the passionate fully realise.

She was too cautious and cool to irritate this dangerous Lady Violet further. She picked up the elaborate pale green satin dress, smoothed out the tulle on the sleeves, and conveyed it to the wardrobe, where it was surrounded by other choice specimens of millinery, a seal-skin mantle trimmed with sable tails, and various articles de luxe that Lady Violet had received from Sir Hugh.

Meredith, approaching the dressing-table, picked up the diamonds and laid them in their several cases, closing one with a click that made Lady Violet put down her pearl and ivory mirror, in which she was admiring her eyebrows, and speak for the first time since entering the mansion.

Meredith was not a vulgar woman, all smirks and courtesies. Lady Violet's taste received no personal repulsion from her contact. She might speak to Meredith without fear of subsequent insolence or familiarities, and there were indeed times when Meredith could be almost brilliant and amusing.

"What do you think of Baron Mivar, Meredith?" said Lady Violet, trying to clear her brow. "Did I hurt your hand the snake attacked? I hope not, but my head aches to-night, and you seemed careless how you brushed my hair. I saw you watching us from the pit. You were amongst those dreadful people who eat oranges. Have you any recollection of having seen this baron before?"

Meredith, even while dimly connecting him with Lionel Hargrave—as we may trace a likeness in the facial play of a stranger's expression with one we have known and loved, long since laid to rest—merely shook her head, remaining in deep thought.

The candles were now burning dim and low in their sockets on the dressing-table, as the lady's-maid, taking up the green spectacles she usually wore, held up the wounded wrist, attacked by the reptile on her first rencontre with Baron Mivar in the plantation. And she looked at the black marks the reptile's teeth had graven on her delicate skin, and shuddered. Then she spoke, impetuously:

"I see a likeness, my lady, between Baron Mivar and Lionel Hargrave."

Lady Violet rose to her feet.

"Am I to be eternally vexed with that man's name, and have his image perpetually thrust before me? Is it not sufficient that I can recognise a gentleman of birth and breeding when I see him? I tell you, Meredith, you are literally crazed on the subject of Lionel Hargrave. You told me once before, when we were driving down Holborn, you saw Lionel Hargrave rolling a cigarette as he lingered on the kerbstone. You even insisted you saw him last week in Regent Street as you went to Swan and Edgar's to purchase some lace for my tulle dress, and for the third time you suggest that another person—a gentleman of the highest rank and most brilliant prospects is Lionel Hargrave—a gentleman too for whom I have the highest admiration."

Meredith discerned new warmth in Lady Violet's speech.

"Take care what you do, my lady; these foreign barons are more often than not adventurers."

The gilded clock on the marble mantelpiece chimed "adventurer" very unpleasantly in Lady Violet's shell-shaped ears, but Meredith's suggestion only increased her confirmed and obstinate belief in the baron's grandeur. That magnificent presence could not be associated with any low connection, such as a twin-brother, who was a fully-pledged pawnbroker, or an unappreciative mamma engaged in pickling eggs or preserving young gherkins in some pastoral village in Moldavia. Lady Violet raised the velvet cushion higher underneath her head, and smiled, regarding Meredith pensively.

"How you are changed," she said, suddenly, with involuntary surprise.

"Yes," answered Meredith, lifting her large dark eyes; her brows knit, and speaking in the tone of a severe monitor; "it is true. I am indeed changed; to-night something warns me I shall be frustrated—to the end."

"You are always returning to that miserable episode in your past career—your infatuation for Lionel Hargrave."

Meredith answered impatiently:

"If you only knew the truth, my lady, as I have already more than half guessed it!"

"What truth? How you tremble. You are pale to ghastliness. It makes me feel as if the powers of darkness were assembling in the room, and that I should be next addressed by the Furies."

"Since he is so far away," went on Meredith, as if addressing herself, "and will never return to claim his rights or his title, it makes little difference whether I speak or no, for his wife, Lady Constance, believes he is false and venal, and yet I know some hope sustains her. What hope?"

She sank dreamily down on a low foot-stool by Lady Violet's side.

"How I detest these romantic tirades!" said Lady Violet, continuing Dumas' novel with a shiver.

"There is a secret known but to few, and had Lionel been kind to me, I would have confessed long since, but I consoled myself with a base revenge, for I was silent. I have wronged him, oh! so fatally."

"Spare me these mental pangs," said Lady Violet, interested in her heroine's lace flounces, "they advance nothing. If you can give me any reason for your erratic movements, I am willing to listen and advise."

"Any reason? Bah! I was not always the dull, prosaic drudge you see me. I had talent and I was famous, but I yielded to temptation and to crime, and I robbed the dead."

Her voice fell away to a hoarse whisper.

"Après?" said Lady Violet, coldly, "the revelations in this chamber of horrors will decidedly nullify the strivings of slumber."

"There is more to hear, my lady," she said, in that penetrating voice which had once held people breathless. "I was an actress in Russia—it was there I first saw Lionel Hargrave."

"Always Hargrave," tapping her foot; "thank goodness the man keeps the other side of the Atlantic."

"And I was rich. I hated all life in which there was no emotion. I loved the intoxicating fumes of success, but gradually a new influence directed my aims—it was like poison stealing through the stem of a flower, till it snaps off withered at the stalk—I was broken and defeated."

"Many are that," said Lady Violet. "I suppose you had your day?"

"It was not that my powers failed me, but there seemed pain in everything. I left the stage; I left Russia. I wanted to escape from something awful and sinister. It was not the look in the eyes of the dead man I had robbed which palsied my energies and nerves, it was not remorse. I had lived five years after that in heartless unconcern, in riot and splendour. It was a controlling influence; it was love."

"Again Hargrave," said Lady Violet, with a faint curve of the lip, but interested in spite of herself. "I thought as much."

"Oh! my Lady Violet, do not sneer. I tell you there is a secret I know affecting your destiny and your welfare. I might do you an injury."

Lady Violet looked concerned, and threw aside her book, having arrived at a satisfactory conclusion as to the value of old Brussel's point.

"More mysteries, more melodrama. The landscape gardener will be next invited by a Cherubim to turn himself into one of the signs of the Zodiac."

"Lionel Hargrave is the heir to fine estates," said Meredith, hastily, then lowering her voice. "If justice were done, your lover, Sir Hugh, would be a beggar."

Lady Violet started to her feet.

"But you cannot prove it?"

"Aphra can!"

"The half-crazed gipsy who wanders about the heath and mutters to herself? This is more likely an attempt to levy black mail."

"She has proofs," said Meredith, then wringing her hands, and with a broken cry the more terrible for her usual repression. "Oh! love! love! why did I deceive you, torture and destroy you, and let you go away and spoil your life? Why have I severed you from her, if this was to be the end. Oh! for the past to be undone; to restore you to happiness; to say 'Come, and I will show you your birth-place—the ancient castle in which you were born, and from which you were stolen by a jealous and bloodthirsty woman. See, beloved, take up your rights and rank, your title and possessions, as the rightful heir—Sir Lionel Allerton!'"

"Are you mad?" cried Lady Violet, staggering backwards. "What falsehoods are you foisting on me? What scheme are you contemplating? Sir Lionel Allerton! Impossible!"

"I tell you," said Meredith, "Lionel Hargrave is the heir to the Allerton estates, and I could have proved it years ago—ay, when your sister married him, but I was a cruel woman!"

Too late—too late! Lionel is lost in the Australian forests!"

Lady Violet spoke again faintly after a long pause.

"Meredith, this is terrible news. How we have injured Constance. Is it indeed true?"

Some thought of reparation darted through her mind—of proclaiming the news on all sides; of sending for the exiled baronet, and acting honestly and even nobly at the last. But then if Baron Mivar hung back and Sir Hugh were panperised, she must inevitably suffer. Better wait a little and see how the baron acted. Once secure of him she could afford to do justice to her sister. Sir Lionel Allerton!

And he, too, had appeared to have consciousness of having been born to better things than a peasant's tasks and fare, a cottage home, and illiterate companions. His poetry, his music, his innate refinement and love of the beautiful, all pointed to this.

She recollected at the coffin's side at Doctor Moseley's that he had alluded to rank and possessions, and she had merely treated it as a chimera of his fancy. Constance had after all judged him aright. He was of noble birth.

How the tangled skein of all their destinies seemed twisted. The modest fortune Sir Hugh had secured in Australia seemed now very contemptible beside the baron's estates in Moldavia, if he were not to succeed to the Allerton property.

Sir Lionel Allerton! She repeated the name that night in her dreams.

(To be Continued.)

DYSPEPTICS.

DYSPEPTIC people are to be pitied, I admit; but in many cases they bring their afflictions upon themselves, and deserve to be punished for their imprudence. One fruitful cause of dyspepsia is the custom of eating between meals. I know this from my own experience. I used to be a forlorn dyspeptic, weak and tremulous. About ten in the morning I fancied I wanted something to eat, at dinner perhaps I had no appetite, at three hungry, when a trifle would supply my wants; no appetite at tea, but about nine in the evening, ravenous, when cold mutton and even cold potatoes tasted nice. But I have learned better things, while I defy anybody to tempt me to partake of dainties between meals. I consider it a sin, for it is everybody's duty to keep in health, not so much for their own sake as for those in the household with them. I have seen dyspeptics who thought themselves privileged to be in a chronic humour, snapping and snarling at everything and everybody, and never to utter a civil word excepting once in a while blurring out an apology, by telling everybody about this awful dyspepsia.

It is a shame for an intelligent man to have dyspepsia. He should know enough to keep himself in health. If dyspeptics could be sent to an asylum where the meals were served at regular hours, no late suppers allowed and nothing between meals, they would get well. Ye dyspeptic, be advised, be firm, establish just such an asylum in your own home. It is silly to allow others to restrain you when you can do it with less expense and more comfort at home. Faithfully try this plan for six months, and you will be surprised at the result. E. H.

THERE will be a large increase in the vote for Volunteers this year. This is as it should be. The Government are at last recognising this important arm in the defence of the country.

ANYONE in want of oil is invited to proceed to the Pacific, where, according to the authority, they will find an oil well at sea in thirty fathoms of water on the California Coast, off Santa Barbara, which sends forth a constant stream of oil, running to waste. Reflecting the light of the sun in all the colours of the rainbow, it produces a singular and beautiful effect.

A RUSSIAN HERO.

OR,

Marko Tyre's Treason.

CHAPTER X.

We have said the empress had a single attendant upon her nocturnal journey. We must glance at this personage.

He was older than the empress—say five-and-fifty, tall, and well-proportioned, bald, dandified, smooth-spoken, professedly an invalid, yet figuring as her majesty's private secretary.

He was known as Count Grosmann, and was reputed to be of German origin—a repute his accent and appearance by no means belied.

He was a sort of shadow to the empress, and yet was kept habitually in the background by her, never being present at any of her public ceremonies or receptions. His apparent status in the palace was precisely that of a household dog.

Any one had to become very intimate with Catherine before they could know that such a being as Count Grosmann existed.

He had no opinions on any subject—at least he never proclaimed any—and he spoke so seldom that he had been nicknamed by the familiars of the court, Count Silence.

There were many well-informed persons in court circles who really supposed him to be deaf and dumb, having seen him around for a score of years without ever hearing a single remark from him.

Who and what was he?

Nobody knew.

He was certainly one of the mysteries of the Russian court, however. It was surprising that Catherine made so much of him, and yet so little.

He had neither friends nor companions. He was never known to absent himself from his regular walks and haunts.

He took no part in public affairs, and was never seen reading, or heard discussing. The intimates of the palace never addressed a word to him.

He flitted about in inane feebleness. It had begun to be whispered that he had great influence with the empress; that he was a sort of magician; that he read the stars for her, or otherwise explored the lore of occult fates; that he was a brother, a cousin, a distant relative; that he was a curious sort of substitute for the usual court idiot or jester; and it was even said, among those who hated Catherine, that he was Satan himself in the disguise of a gentleman, and obliged to do her bidding in all respects by virtue of some potent and horrible contract.

In a word, Count Grosmann was a man of mystery, whose mystery had not yet been fathomed.

In the long course of years, it had once chanced that Count Grosmann had been overheard talking to Catherine with more force than respect, reproaching her for her acts and associations, and assuming a tone of authority that was really surprising; but the unfortunate to whom this experience had happened was found dead in his bed within forty-eight hours afterwards, and before he had found occasion to say a great deal about it.

"Seems to me your majesty might as well have made this visit in the morning," muttered the count, as the carriage began leaving the city behind it.

"There's no time like the present," the empress contented herself with replying.

"The roads are abominable!"

"Will you be quiet, sir? You are here to keep me company, and not to bore me with complaints or other remarks. I wish to have my thoughts to myself."

"Thinking of Marko Tyre, I suppose? The young man is really clever. Where did he come from? Curious I never saw much of

him. What do you propose to do with him? I—"

"Count Grosmann!" interrupted Catherine, turning shortly upon him, "will you hold your tongue? If not, I'll dump you out into the mud, and let you go back to the palace on foot. I can get along without you."

The remark proved sufficient for the work for which it was intended. Count Grosmann relapsed into silence.

The carriage rolled on with a great deal of jolting, but it rolled on rapidly, the three stout horses in front of it being almost constantly at a gallop.

After meeting one or two vehicles, horsemen, and several pedestrians, it had all the road to itself in consequence of the lateness of the hour, and continued to press on swiftly towards its destination.

It was quite late at night—or very early in the morning—when the carriage of the empress rolled quietly into the court of Roda's dwelling, and came to a halt in front of the principal entrance.

All was still around the premises and upon them.

The sky was a little clouded. Quite a breeze had arisen.

"A fine hour to scare respectable folks out of their beds," growled Grosmann, as he alighted from the carriage and offered his hand to the empress. "Seems to me—"

"They've heard us," interrupted Catherine, quietly. "There is a light!"

Sounds of a stir within the mansion were indeed noticeable, and a light had commenced throwing its rays out upon the travellers from a large lamp over the door.

"They are, of course, always ready for business here," muttered Grosmann, "I understand Miss Roda believes her mother to be still among the living, and a single fact like that is enough to make her watchful and expectant. How does she know when her mother may return, demanding admittance?"

The door of the mansion opened at this moment, and a favourite servant, fully dressed, and wearing side-arms, came out upon the steps, inclining himself profoundly to the new-comers, and at the same time scanning them intently.

"Is your mistress visible?" asked Catherine, as she led the way to the entrance.

"Certainly, madame," replied the porter, who found himself unable to obtain that view of the faces before him which was absolutely essential to their recognition. "Please walk in."

The visitors complied. They soon found themselves in a large reception-room, which was so poorly lighted that they had no difficulty in preserving their incognito without seeming to direct any especial attention to that end.

"I can see Miss Gradowsky, I suppose, seeing that my business is very important, and concerns her closely?" pursued the empress.

"Of course, madame. Yet—"

He was interrupted by the opening of a door at the end of the room, and by the entrance of Roda, who seemed as carefully dressed as if she had been expecting the visitors.

Her representative bowed profoundly, and withdrew to the entrance, closing the door of the reception-room behind him.

Count Grosmann dropped into a seat with the air of a man who is perfectly conscious of being of no account whatever, not even to the extent of claiming a salutation.

"Can I see you privately, Miss Gradowsky?" asked the empress, saluting the heiress politely.

"Certainly, madame—pardon, most gracious majesty! This way, if your majesty pleases."

She led the way from the apartment.

"You have quick eyes, dear, to recognise me so readily," observed Catherine.

"Your majesty will recall that I have been watching for news of my parents," returned Roda, gently. "I scan everyone closely. A carriage can never approach the house after the usual hours without putting me into a

thrill of hope and expectancy! I say to myself that I may now have news of my father or mother."

"Poor girl!" murmured the empress, with apparent sympathy. "I am sorry to have disturbed you!"

"I was awake, your majesty! You have not disturbed me in the least," declared Roda, simply. "On the contrary, I am very glad to see your majesty, and very sensible of the high honour conferred upon me."

A few steps more brought the couple to Roda's private apartment, where Catherine accepted an invitation to be seated.

"You are even more beautiful than report has told me, dear," said the empress, throwing back her veil, and bringing all the magic of her glance and voice to bear upon her heroine. "I feel that I have really been defrauded by not having you near me long since. When will it be convenient for you to come and pass a few months with me?"

"Oh, your majesty—ten thousand thanks for the honour. I cannot leave home!"

The empress raised her brows questioningly.

"I feel that I must be here, your majesty, to receive my poor father or mother in case they should come, or to receive news of them, in case anyone should discover their existence or whereabouts."

"Poor child! You believe your parents are still living, then?"

"Why not, most gracious majesty? I believe something was done with my mother by a hired assassin at the instigation of the Countess Sabielin, if I may venture to talk confidentially to your majesty."

"And what is your theory about your father, Roda?"

"I do not have any, your majesty. I dare not settle upon any. The absence of my father is an impenetrable mystery to me, as well as an agonising horror. Yet I cannot and will not believe that he is dead."

A hard and inscrutable expression flitted over the averted face of the visitor.

"It is indeed a great mystery," she murmured. "I see that you are fretting yourself to death in this solitude. I suspected something of the kind, and several little points decided me to pay you a visit. For instance, I have just had a serious talk with Colonel Dal about you. He will not bother you again. I have expressly forbidden him to ever again intrude upon you!"

Roda drew a long sigh of relief, and hastened to express her thanks warmly.

"The truth is," resumed Catherine, "that man is virtually in disgrace, I having just made several disagreeable discoveries about him. He is in no wise worthy of your love, or of my favour. The letter I gave him for you was written under a total misapprehension of the facts in the case. To tell you this is one of the motives of my visit. But I am here more particularly to ask you to become one of my ladies of honour, with the rank of Baroness!"

The eyes of our heroine opened a little wider than usual with the astonishment this communication gave her.

"It is very good and kind of your majesty to think of me," she murmured, with a profoundly grateful inclination of her head. "But I am surprised beyond measure."

"Nevertheless I can show you that my action is perfectly natural, dear," returned Catherine, with her most engaging smile. "You are in great trouble, as well as in an unhealthy solitude, and yet you are one of the most beautiful and charming young ladies in my dominions. But it is not entirely upon your account, child, that I am here. I am selfish, I confess. I am thinking of myself. You can have no idea how heavily the cares of state weigh upon me; no idea of my weariness and loneliness; of the falsity and hollowness of everybody around me; of my yearnings for one real friend and companion who can be to me as another self. For some weeks past I have been feeling as if I must soon supply myself with such a friend

and companion, or else become rabid altogether."

The mournful and gloomy air with which Catherine uttered these remarks made profound impression upon Roda.

"Can it be that such is your majesty's lot?" she demanded, looking as shocked as astonished.

"I have not told you the half, poor child," was the answer. "The vanity of a throne, as described by Solomon, is one of the most truthful descriptions in existence. I not only want your pure and true heart to lean upon, but I want your assistance in deciding the great questions which are constantly pressing upon me. And since it will be a healthful change for you, as well as a great pleasure and benefit to me to have you with me hereafter, I trust you will at once accept my invitation to make your home henceforth at the palace."

Again expressing her thanks ardently, Roda brought all the faculties and sentiments of her soul to bear upon Catherine's proposition.

It was only natural for her to decide at a glance that her residence at court could be turned to account in a number of ways. She would not only be freed from Dal's persecutions, but she might be able to do a great deal, in a quiet way, for the advancement of Marko's fortunes, and to also solve the terrible questions respecting her parents which had so long been pressing upon her.

"You will easily comprehend that there is no absolute necessity of tying yourself down to the estates," suggested Catherine, again smiling pleasantly. "You will leave the best of households behind you, and at the least discovery in regard to any of the problems you have mentioned a couple of hours will suffice for the bringing of the news to you. The change in your destiny that I have had the pleasure of proposing to you is chiefly valuable to you, however. I can well understand the great advantages it will afford you for the prosecution of the all-important inquiries pressing upon you. Being so near the throne the light will flow upon you from every direction. If your mother lives those who are interested in her existence will see at once how important it is that they should communicate with you."

The girl started at this suggestion as violently as if she had received a blow. It had long been her belief that the actual abductor of Lady Gradowsky had preserved her alive with the intention of obtaining a large sum of money for her restoration to liberty, and it was easy to see how a plot of this nature would be ripened by such an advent into power and publicity as was now at Roda's service.

"If your majesty will kindly bear with my ignorance of court life and my possible awkwardness, and not be too greatly disappointed at the difference between what I really am and what your majesty so generously assumes me to be," she suggested, "why, I shall really be glad to accept the high destiny your majesty has so graciously offered me."

"It is settled, then," exclaimed Catherine, with visible satisfaction, as she drew Roda to her breast and caressed and kissed her. "In a day or two, as soon as you can arrange your affairs for your absence—and really what is there to do, as you will be so near home all the time?—I will expect to see you at the palace. In the meantime you will allow me to have my way in the little matter I suggested—that of naming you Baroness Gradowsky, and having you duly gazetted as one of my ladies of honour."

"How good your majesty is," murmured Roda, as she timidly returned the caresses of the empress. "I never dreamed of your majesty having the least thought of me."

"That is because you are as modest as you are good," said Catherine, as she gave Roda a final embrace and arose to her feet. "It is all understood, then, between us? You will present yourself at the palace at your earliest convenience, and I will do whatever I can in the meantime to make your advent at court commanding and pleasant. Good-night, dear, and pleasant dreams."

The empress took her leave with Count Grosmann, waving a graceful adieu to our heroine, who had attended her to the steps of the carriage.

"The visit is a success," was the mental remark with which Catherine wrapped herself in her cloak against the damp chill of the night, as she dashed away upon the homeward ride. "She's an honest and simple creature—as innocent as she is beautiful! I had no suspicion such a lovely flower was blooming in this wilderness! She is really a formidable rival. But I will turn her head completely, even as she will turn the heads in her new sphere of all the marrying dignitaries at my court. It will be easy for me to direct her fate as I will!"

"Your majesty is still thoughtful, I see," observed Count Grosmann, with an ill-concealed sneer. "Still thinking of Marko Tyre, I suppose?"

"Be quiet, Count," was the warning answer.

Not another word was spoken by either during the long ride back to the capital. Yet at every moment the eyes of Catherine gleamed out into the early morning, from beneath her close wrappings, with a strangely bright and fixed expression. She had really entered upon her rivalry with Roda Gradowsky!

CHAPTER XI.

It will be remembered that we left Colonel Dal proceeding to the ante-chamber of the palace, whither Catherine had sent him to await her further orders.

The colonel was more than uneasy at the change which had taken place in his relations to the empress, and especially at the injunctions she had laid upon him to cease his attentions to Roda. He realised that he was in a bad way.

"Is she going to arrest me?" he muttered. Seating himself at one of the desks that occupied a corner of the apartment, he picked up the wick of a lamp with a pin, and bent over a sheet of paper, pen in hand, with a view of dissembling to any chance comer the disgrace to which he had fallen.

"Well, times have changed," he said to himself, after reflecting briefly upon the interview he had just had with the empress Catherine. "There was a day—not long ago either—when I ventured to hope that I would figure at an early day as a Prince of the Empire, but it looks now as if I were in a fair way of dying in a dungeon. It wouldn't surprise me if she were to forget all about me, and leave me here until this hour to-morrow! But, of course, I shall move before I grow fast to the furniture! What earthly object can the empress have in keeping me here in waiting?"

For a moment, as his reflections reached this point, his countenance brightened.

"The truth is," he finally assured himself, with an attempt at being philosophical, "the usual fate of favourites has overtaken me. I have simply fallen into disfavour."

His thoughts having come back to the consideration of his own status, he was soon engaged in a contemplation that was anything but pleasant.

He drummed upon the desk. In short, he was soon fretting like a wild beast in a cage. He was thus engaged when a soft hand touched his arm and the gentle rustle of a feminine garb smote his ear.

"Ah, Florette!" he breathed, looking up.

The new-comer was a maid to one of the imperial maids of honour. She was a bright, piquant girl, French by her mother's side, and had many dealings with Dal for the mutual advancement of their fortunes.

"You are gloomy," said Florette, as a long sigh escaped the officer. "What has happened?"

"I seem to be under a cloud, dear," replied Dal. "The empress has just raked me over the coals, and has sent me here to cool off at my leisure!"

"I see you do not quite comprehend the

situation," said Florette. "Marko Tyre is up and Colonel Dal is down! Captain Tyre is somewhere in the interior of the palace at this moment. He has not only had two long interviews with the empress this evening, but she has given him a ring by virtue of which he can enter her presence at any hour of the day or night."

The countenance of Colonel Dal became livid with rage, envy, and chagrin.

"Are you sure?" he asked, huskily.

"Sure? I've seen Tyre coming and going with my own eyes."

The officer remained as motionless a few moments as if the communication had transfixed him.

"It is easy to see why my nose is out of joint," he said. "I was just saying to myself that I am tumbling. It seems that Captain Tyre is rising."

"I must go now," whispered Florette, hurriedly. "But I will keep my eyes open, and see you again in the course of the day, if possible."

She had scarcely gone when the outer doors of the ante-chamber opened with considerable bustle, and a group of men entered.

Prominent among the new-comers was Marshal Blitskin. The marshal was under strong guard and displayed in every glance and movement a keen consciousness of his menacing situation.

Colonel Dal was familiar enough, of course, with Catherine's administration to take in the meaning of this scene at a glance.

"I'm not tumbling alone," he thought, with a grim smile. "What's the trouble?"

He lowered and averted his head, so as not to take any visible notice of the group, and in a few moments it swept past him into the inner apartment.

"Tyre is within, eh?" breathed Dal, arising and looking after the new-comers. "The empress will evidently be engaged for a quarter of an hour at the least. Suppose I take a quiet survey of my surroundings?"

He acted upon his thought.

As a member of the imperial household, he was of course free to go and come in any direction, so long as he kept to the courts and corridors and other public places.

He was soon looking into the room where Captain Tyre lay upon a lounge unconscious, in charge of a chamberlain and two motherly-looking women belonging to the palace.

"Seems to me the young gentleman ought to have a doctor," said one of the latter.

"The orders of Golos are not to call any physician—or to take any step whatever beyond what I have stated," said the chamberlain, quietly.

"Strange such a strong man should have such a swoon!" said the other woman.

"And just after taking supper with the empress, too!" returned the first speaker.

Colonel Dal started so violently as to cause the door, which he was holding ajar half an inch or so, to squeak a little. His face glowed lividly, while his eyes beamed with a startled comprehension.

"Ah! the captain has been eating and drinking with her majesty?" he said to himself. "She has drugged him! Why?"

His whole soul was aroused on the instant. He inclined his head to the aperture.

"I see we are going to have lively times in the palace," pursued the woman who had last spoken. "Her majesty has sent for another batch of generals and marshals, and is very angry about something!"

"It is another conspiracy, no doubt," said the chamberlain, as quietly as before. "It does seem as if all the villains in Russia were working to dislodge us!"

"The empress will make short work of all that show themselves!" said the second woman. "And none have yet failed to be detected, sooner or later!"

The chamberlain moistened the lips of our hero with spirits of camphor, and slipped quietly from the apartment by one door, as the two

women vanished by another. Our unconscious hero was alone.

"A chance for me!" breathed Dal.

He boldly entered. A groan came from the sufferer, as if even in his unconsciousness he experienced a sense of alarm from the presence of Dal, but the intruder assured himself by a brief survey of his rival that his senses were still locked in an unnatural slumber.

"I'll search his pockets!" resolved Dal, after bending a long glance around and listening. "I may find a sweet morsel or two from Miss Gradowsky!"

Sure enough, the villain soon produced from the breast pocket of Marko's coat a number of letters he had lately received from Roda.

He hastened to glance them over, his face blackening with every expression he encountered.

"I see I have been an idiot," he muttered. "A girl who writes in that way to a man can never, never marry another! And especially when a girl speaks of a man in the way she speaks of me, he might as well realise first as last that fair means and fair words will never help him!"

It is easy to comprehend what Roda had written to Marko about her unwelcome suitor. She had simply painted him according to his merits.

"I'll keep these sweet epistles for future reference!" growled Dal, as he stowed them away upon his person. "I see that I shall have to throw off the mask!—that I must bare my teeth to her!"

Another groan came from Marko's lips.

"Ah! Why not?" breathed Dal, into whose soul had evidently crept a horrible suggestion. "If I could bring him to his senses, the rest would be easy. I am his superior officer, and—I'll try it."

He produced a flask from one of his pockets, and poured down the throat of our hero a large dose of a stimulant. Its effects seemed magical.

Marko's groans increased; he moved uneasily; his features worked; and his staring eyes rolled in their sockets.

Dal set to chafing his hands violently, and was thus engaged when, a few minutes later, the light of consciousness came back to Marko's eyes.

"Where—what has happened, Colonel Dal?" asked our hero, struggling to a sitting posture.

"You have had a fit, Captain," replied Dal. "Don't you remember? after your supper with the empress, you know?"

The thoughts of Marko came back rapidly to the scenes in which he had so lately figured.

"I remember now," he said. "But isn't it strange that I should be taken in that way so suddenly? I never had a fit in my life."

"The wonder is that you have come round so promptly," said Dal, lowering his voice to a whisper. "It was intended that you should lie here for some hours."

"Intended! What do you mean, Colonel?"

"You've had no fit! You were drugged by the empress: Drugged in what you ate and drank, you know?"

"Drugged?" repeated Marko. "With what object?"

"Who knows the purpose of the empress in many of her acts?" asked Dal, in the same mysterious tone of voice he had before used. "But I think I have a clue to the mystery of this particular case. The empress has ordered me to be ready to leave, in five minutes from now, for the residence of Miss Gradowsky. The empress is in love with you, Captain, and has consequently turned all the batteries of her hate upon Miss Gradowsky. The design of her majesty is another mysterious disappearance—as in the case of the young lady's father and mother."

"You—you are not serious!" murmured Marko, startled and bewildered, his senses being still to a great degree under the influence of the drug he had taken.

"Not serious," echoed Dal. "Why, I have her written orders on my desk in the ante-chamber. I'll bring the document."

He stepped in the direction indicated.

"Can this be true?" thought Marko.

He was still repeating this query when Dal came back to him, and unfolded a formidable looking document under his gaze.

"Read," enjoined the colonel.

Marko read accordingly.

"Sure enough!" he gasped, stunned and yet startled, speechless and yet a prey to an awful flood of emotions.

For months Dal had carried a forged signature of the empress in blank in his pocket—so good a forgery that it would have deceived a better judge than was Marko in the state of excitement into which his superior's pretended revelations had thrown him. To fill out the document at the desk had been the work of a moment.

"You see?" said Dal, as he folded up the forged paper and placed it in his pocket. "What is to be done? In five minutes the empress will be looking for me. But understand once for all, Captain Tyre, that I am not the man to do this thing to a brother officer. We have had our little rivalries, perhaps, but all open and fair, and I have accepted the decision which has been made in your favour. Instead of getting ready for my departure, therefore, I began looking for you, with the result you know already. What is to be done?"

"Done!" cried Marko, leaping to his feet and grasping his sword. "We must save Roda!"

"That is what I was about to suggest," said Dal. "Of course I go with you! Having gone so far I cannot go back. In death or in life, I am at your disposal, Captain! But I hear footsteps. Come!"

He led the way towards the entrance.

"You will remember the empress gave you a ring," said Dal. "It is as good for your departure as for your entrance. As for me, my way is always open. You go your way, and I will go mine—to avoid suspicion! We'll meet on the quay of the palace, at the landing!"

A few moments later, the two men had gained by separate routes the rendezvous appointed.

"We had better cross the river in a boat," suggested Dal. "It is the easiest way of effecting our disappearance."

Marko assented. They were soon afloat, Dal rowing, our hero steering, and lost in the dense mist that was covering the river, as mentioned in a former page. By the time the boat was fifty yards from the quay this mist had become a fog so dense that the two men could hardly see each other.

"Look sharp, Tyre," cried Dal, suddenly.

"What is that behind you?"

Marko turned his head naturally.

At that instant Dal gave him a furious blow with one of his ears.

The victim tumbled forward as if lightning had struck him.

Not an instant was lost by Dal in tumbling Marko into the river.

Then he rowed back and landed, leaving the boat where he had found it, and assuring himself that his return, like his embarkation with our hero, had been entirely unnoticed.

And within three minutes thereafter Dal sat at his desk in the ante-chamber as calm as a summer morning awaiting the orders of the empress.

"He is gone," was his thought; "and as soon as I am dismissed I will look after Roda. He is in the river, and she in my power. I shall soon be triumphant if her majesty leaves me my freedom!"

(To be Continued.)

THE Baroness Burdett-Coutts has subscribed a thousand pounds to the fund for the relief of the shareholders of the City of Glasgow Bank.

SCIENCE.

There appear to have been some inaccurate statements published lately in regard to the invention of the speaking telephone and the musical telephone respectively, which Professor James C. Watson, of Michigan University, has endeavoured to set right. According to him, the speaking telephone was invented by Professor Graham Bell, and the musical telephone by Mr. Elisha Gray. Professor Watson was one of the judges of instruments of research and precision at the Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia, where both telephones were shown, and he ought to know.

The report that great quantities of floating pumice stone had been met with by vessels in the Pacific Ocean near the Ellice Islands is confirmed by Australian and Samoan papers. The captain of a missionary barque who visited those islands this last summer says that not only was the sea covered with pumice, but hundreds of tons of it had been thrown up on the shores of every island in the group. It is supposed to have come from some volcano further west.

The theory that periods of great commercial depression throughout the world coincide with periods of solar inactivity characterised by the absence of spots on the sun, is advocated by such distinguished men of science as Professor Stanley Jevons, and Professor Roscoe, of Owen's College, Manchester.

It is stated by Mr. G. J. Symons, F.R.S., that a rain gauge placed on the ground will always collect more rain than one placed a few inches about the surface. The difference is ascribed almost wholly to the action of the wind.

It is assumed by many anthropologists that the most ancient monuments and implements of Egypt were the product of the highest civilisation which ever existed in that country, or, in other words, that there was no infancy of art in Egypt—the further back we trace its history the higher appears to have been the civilisation. This assumption has been questioned by Captain Richard F. Burton, in a paper recently read by him before the Anthropological Society, on his explorations in the Land of Midian. He says many considerations led to the conclusion that a savage tribe, resembling the cave-dwellers of Western Europe, preceded the ancient Egyptians in the occupation of the lower part of the valley of the Nile.

CONCENTRATE YOUR EFFORT.

WHEN Agassiz was asked to give his opinion on a question in chemistry, he persistently declined. "I am no chemist," was his only reply. This resolute concentration of his power in a few well defined channels was one of the secrets of his eminence. In this age, when knowledge goes on adding province after province to her vast empire, one can hope to explore but a little space. There are no longer any universal conquerors. Goethe and Humboldt have left no successors, and if they themselves were to return, they could not possibly take the positions they once held. Half the intellectual failures come from a lack of definite aim and an unflinching devotion to some special pursuit.

When so many interesting fields of inquiry are open, it requires a Roman fortitude of mind to purposely give up all save one or two. But this is precisely what you must do if you mean to make your power tell in the world. To concentrate is to master something eventually, while to diffuse your time and energy is to acquire a great mass of imperfect knowledge, and to hold superficially a multitude of disconnected facts. There isn't a part of the human body, or a branch of any science, upon which one could not spend a lifetime of work, and yet leave much untouched.

The Greek scholar who died lamenting that he had not confined his work to the definite article, instead of taking up in addition the indefinite,

and so leaving both incomplete, is an example of what is demanded of one who means to master any one thing. When a scholar sets himself to do one thing, and nothing else, he finds himself unable to get everything at first hand. He is forced to take something from other workers in the same field. This is the experience of all life as well. You can do well only a few things, and the fewer they are the better you will do them.

The Admirable Crichton type of man is very interesting to read about, but in actual life he is likely to raise great hopes, be very entertaining, and die without doing anything. The man who concentrates must often admit his ignorance, and he need not be ashamed to do so, for he knows that on his own ground he can accept the challenge of every comer.—[Ed.]

SUMMER IN SWEDEN.

THE Swedish summer is short, and the year has hardly any spring or autumn; but the summer days are very long, and the sun, after setting, sinks only a few degrees under the horizon, filling the whole space during the night with a mystical luminousness which make even a pigstye romantic.

At midnight you can walk in the garden and read a letter from your mother, and how singular the letter is! Every word in it has a new meaning, and so has every object around you: The street, the house, the old church, the river, the hills, all look so strange, and yet they look as if you had never before understood their true meaning.

The houses do not press the ground with their weight; they float in the air like pictures. The river does not push its waves forth through a melancholy fall from one pebble to another; it only turns its hands, rapidly but gently, to catch the image of the stars. The trees do not suck and heave and toil for a bit of existence; no, they breathe, they live, they whisper about Paradise.

SOME persons may have noticed in London daily papers an advertisement offering £500 for the marriage certificate of a Mr. Ricketts, or Mr. Jarvis, between the years 1800 and 1801. On the finding of this document, mainly turns, it is said, the possibility of the Rev. W. E. R. Jarvis, a hard-working curate in Colchester, formerly an officer in the navy, proving his title to an ancient earldom.

By the first week in March it is hoped that the second section of the Metropolitan bridges—Lambeth, Vauxhall, Chelsea, the Albert, and Battersea—will be opened toll free to the public. By August next it is considered probable that the whole of the bridges within the Metropolitan area will have been freed from toll, both for vehicle and passenger traffic.

The following startling announcement was given out by the parish clerk in a small church in Somersetshire recently, where the rector has to divide his labours between two churches: "I give notice next Sunday there won't be no Sunday, cause Rector's goin' to t'other parish fishin'." By this the accustomed congregation understood that the clergyman would be officiating in another parish a few miles off.

COMMENTING on the statement made by a local paper that there were 25,000 more females than males in Kensington, and that the curate especially found an embarras de richesses, a dweller in a village in London says:—I fancy that if either of these curates had to change places with the vicar (three times a widower) of this little country parish, they would gladly and gratefully return to their labours in Kensington. There are here, he continued, fifty three eligible widows all pulling different ways, and very widely different in opinion, with one exception—devotion to the vicar.

THE long talked-of temperance hotel for the metropolis is at last to be proceeded with. The contracts have been signed, and the other

arrangements completed. The building will cost over £11,000, of which nearly £10,000 has been subscribed. The promoters are so consistently temperance men that the architect and contractors chosen are one and all total abstainers.

The bronze lions in Trafalgar Square are beginning to wear away already. Not one of them is without incipient signs of decay. This is very bad. The British Lion evidently will not do without some kind of protection, in this case a coat of colour.

It appears that a sum of £26,000, consisting of remittances to Europe from merchants in Mexico, has been captured by fifteen brigands on the railway between Puebla and Vera Cruz. About a dozen brigands took third-class tickets, seating themselves in a carriage behind them. Leaving these on the line, they forced the driver to continue at full speed up to a point where twenty-five armed men on horseback ordered a halt, whereupon the whole party carried off the money on mules, killing the guard, and seriously wounding an inspector of the line.

ONE of the presents on the occasion of the marriage of Miss Christie with Mr. Hope Johnstone, was a beautiful plate-chest, full of silver forks and spoons, given by the bride's mother, a perfect household treasure, and altogether a most sensible cadeau.

Among the latest wonders talked about is the Notenspiel, which, though to the eye a toy, is guaranteed to teach a child to sing and play at sight. By this ambitious plaything the child is said to be made thoroughly acquainted with the musical system. He is enabled by it to get a whole chord and even a musical phrase, and thus learns unconsciously, as it were, to sing and play at sight. The inventor is a Viennese.

ONE day recently 82,000 notes were paid into the Bank of England, the largest number ever received in one day. Assuming that each note was of no larger amount than £5 the aggregate sum of the notes was nearly half a million.

AT "Cinderella dances" everybody comes at eight and leaves at twelve o'clock, a short invitation only is necessary. There is a good deal of the cinder about these affairs—lemonade abounds but there is no supper.

It has been proposed to introduce the electric light into the London ball-rooms—as it will improve the aspect of the fair dancers, and keep the room cool. The idea of a cool room at present is an addition to the horrible.

THE BROWN FAMILY.

IT was Midsummer, and the Browns always went to Ilfracombe one particular week. Their great-grandfather had founded Brownsville, and every generation had taken the ironworks and made money. The feminine part of the family seemed always to keep the ascendancy in numbers; and now five female Browns came down to the six o'clock dinner, dressed in their last summer's best gowns. Mrs. Brown, a short, fair, pleasant-looking woman, with light auburn hair, had been the mother of two sons as well as three daughters, but the sons had died.

On Mr. Brown's death the business name and prestige had gone to a cousin, the money to his own family. His widow was left in affluent circumstances, but not being a shrewd woman, the income alone was hers; the property at her death would go the girls. When they came of age they inherited twenty thousand pounds; when their mother was done with hers, it would make nearly as much more. The youngest had inherited hers at midwinter.

Mr. Brown's sister was a member of the household, and had her independent fortune. She had two married sisters, but she liked pleasant-tempered Mrs. Brown better than either of them. She was now verging on to fifty, a well preserved and passably well-looking woman, but the Browns were not a handsome race.

They were an old county family, deeply imbued with pride, and bound about with their

money. Other people might do this or that—they had to think of position. It was their bounden duty to uphold their little corner of the world, and they did it bravely. The plebeians of yesterday might run off to Brighton, witness races and such rather low amusements, but they knew their duty better.

Penniless, husband-seeking girls might brush their hair in their eyes like a Skye terrier, and flirt with young men, but a Miss Brown would not so demean herself.

Miss Sarah Brown was twenty-six, somewhat taller than her mother, with the same fair complexion, her auburn hair a shade or two browner, her eyes more of a hazel, and already she had begun to grow stout. She had been educated at a boarding-school, read French, and played the piano in a heavy, practical way.

When she was about twenty she had a lover, but Aunt Henrietta had pointed out the enormity of a Brown marrying a clerk, and Miss Sarah had done her duty nobly and dismissed him. True, he was now a partner in a flourishing house, but Sarah was too complacent to regret him.

Caroline was next, taller, and with more character, which means in this case that she was able to lay hold of the Brown idiosyncrasies with still more energy and determination. Her hair was a chestnut brown and her eyes were a somewhat dull blue; her figure rather clumsy, though she was not thin.

Now Amy ought to be a laughing, dancing, teasing little witch, with beauty enough to make amends for the whole family, but I am sorry to say she, too, was a Brown. Still, if you could have shaken that Brown complacency and primness out of her, made her laugh and dance and sing and—well, flirt a little, and dressed her in a more modern style, I think she would have been more than passable.

Not that the Brown clothes were really old-fashioned, but the stiff silks had a cumbrous, antiquated, dowager-like look; the serges and pongees were the thickest of their kind, and made with a view to durability, though they were taken apart next season.

But Amy was slenderer, brighter, quicker. Then her hair was light, a kind of pale gold without the reddish tint, and her eyes were a clear, frank blue. If there only had been a little more taste and grace about her!

"Oh, there are the Browns," said Mrs. Griggs, another old county matron, from the lower end of the table. And there was a very general nodding and smiling.

"What is all that about?" said Bertie Collins to his cousin, Mrs. Woodham. "Five women, and three women wagging their heads. Those are new people, are they not?"

"Yes; they are the Browns. 'Oh, Bertie!'"

"Do those women all belong to one family?" he asked.

"The stout one is Mrs. Brown. The three on her right are her three daughters. The other is her sister-in-law. You have heard of the Brownsville Ironworks?"

"Oh, yes!"

Bertie nodded indifferently.

"They are the iron people, though their father is dead."

"I should say they were wooden," in a very, very grave tone.

"Better than brass."

"Well, yes, considering they are women. All single but the stout one?"

"The mother?—Yes."

"How does she stand it?"

Someone spoke across the table to Mrs. Woodham, and she was forced into a general conversation. Bertie meanwhile watched the Browns. "Good eaters," he thought, rather disparagingly, as if an appetite and a healthy digestion were a crime.

Not exactly that, but their manner offended him—the complacent air which seemed plainly to say:

"We pay the highest prices, and are entitled to plenty of the best quality."

They had pudding, then cream, and finally fruit.



[THE MISSES BROWN.]

They were dressed, so they went to the great parlour. People congregated in little groups and talked.

Gentlemen went out to smoke. The five Browns were ranged in a ridiculous row.

"Are you smitten, Bertie?" said Fanny Woodham, a gay voice.

Bertie blushed and laughed.

"I hope you are. Each of those young women represents twenty thousand pounds well invested, and more to come at their mother's death."

"Heiresses?"

"Yes; food for designing young men," replied his cousin.

There was a little stir, and the band took their place on the balcony. There was a horrid scraping of tuning up.

"Partners for a quadrille."

Miss Brown did not dance. She had tried a little at school, but she could not remember the figures from one day to the next. Miss Carry, being a church member, was never quite sure what she should consider her duty if anyone did ask her to dance. Amy had thought school dances immense nuisances, but last summer she had looked on the dancers with envy, and now—

She sat there with wistful eyes and beating heart. Two or three quadrilles ended, then a waltz, followed by a schottische. Bertie Collins and his cousin's wife, Fanny Woodham, danced together. She looked radiant, and he was very handsome.

Sarah leaned over. Amy was in the middle.

"Caroline," she said, "didn't we see that woman last summer? Wasn't she here to visit the Merrits? I am sure I remember her peculiar hair, and her having such regular teeth. I am sure they must be false."

Carry considered. She was a most methodical girl. Give her time, and I think she would be able to remember back to the very hour of her birth.

"Yes," answered Carry, presently; "Woodham—wasn't that her name? Is that her husband, I wonder?"

"Of course he is. You don't suppose, being married, she would go waltzing round with a young man like that?"

"Of course not."

Amy took a second look. Oh, how bright, how happy they were! How they enjoyed themselves! If only Sarah or Carry were married, or if—oh, to have just one good time!

Bertie Collins was looking at her. Not a pretty girl, of course, not piquant like Fanny, not intellectual or poised in high-bred calm, but something in the wistful, beseeching blue eyes touched him.

Amy glanced down at her navy blue silk trimmed with blue velvet, at her wide chain bracelets with cameo clasps, at her three or four valuable rings, and thought with true Brown complacency of her handsome cameo brooch and her costly white silk necktie, and her expensive point lace. Fanny had an illusion ruche and rosebuds, and—a good time.

At half-past ten Miss Henrietta Brown rose. Mrs. Brown had been nodding for the last hour.

She escorted her and Amy, and the two girls followed.

They shook out their silk dresses, folded their fine handkerchiefs and neckties, put away their jewellery in a private compartment in their trunks, made a few comments, and went to bed.

The next evening they met Mrs. Woodham at a ball.

Sarah wondered whether it would be quite the thing to march up and down with Mrs. Woodham. Who was she? Did she belong to a family? Carry wondered how she was received in society, and whether it would do for a Brown to appear familiar with her.

"Come, Miss Amy, I am sure you must be tired of sitting still," and she held out her hand, smiling winsomely.

Miss Amy! Eight amazed Brown eyes stared at Mrs. Woodham. The remaining two, the clear, frank blue eyes, smiled back with a glow of delight. Amy joined Mrs. Woodham, and the latter slipped her hand through Amy's arm.

"Amy," said Aunt Henrietta.

"I'll bring her back safely," laughingly returned Mrs. Woodham, and before another objection could be made she had her half across the room.

"Shall I go out in the moonlight, Miss Amy? I may call you so, may I not, although we are almost strangers?" smiling bewitchingly. "It's such a pretty name."

"It was great-grandmother Brown's, and we always have family names."

"Now, I was chistened Felicia Hemans because my mother was so fond of her poetry, my pretty-girl-mother, who was married at sixteen and lived only two years. Everyone calls me Fanny."

"What a sweet name."

"Certainly Miss Amy Brown had a very pleasant voice."

"Do you know many people here?"

"No. I—we—" and Amy blushed with embarrassment. "Oh, Mrs. Woodham, may I talk to you?" cried poor frightened Amy, clinging tighter to her arm. "I've never had a friend—nothing but the family. Of course I love my sisters, and all our relatives, but don't you think families are apt to be—so much alike? If there was something quite new—I thought of it last night, when so many of the girls were dancing, and that pretty girl dressed in blue—do you know her? She danced with your husband—did she not?"

"My husband?" Mrs. Woodham laughed merrily. "That is my husband's cousin, Bertie Collins. Mr. Collins was my guardian—I was only seven when papa died. There were six boys, and they all loved me as if I were a little queen. But one time Frank Woodham—their cousin—came to make a visit, and he fell in love, too, and I fell in love with him. I am twenty-four, and have been married six years. Three of the boys are married, and Bertie is home with his parents. In my estimation, he is quite a hero—some day I will tell you why. Would you not like to be introduced to him?"

Amy said she would, in a quiver of delight.

"Oh, here you are," said Mrs. Woodham, coming upon Bertie suddenly. "Miss Brown, allow me to introduce my cousin, Mr. Collins. Miss Amy Brown," and then bethinking herself, she went on with the whole family, though Bertie caught the gleam of mirth in her eye.

"Mrs. Woodham, isn't this my quadrille?" inquired a strange voice. "Collins, you are wanted for a vis-a-vis."

"Miss Brown, may I have the pleasure?" and he bowed over her hand.

"Oh, I should so like," and Amy's face was transformed for a moment. "But I am afraid—and I don't dance very well."

Collins took Amy right along, and the remaining Browns were aghast with such a proceeding. But they were outside, and were spared the dreadful sight of Amy dancing with a strange man.

"Don't feel frightened; you will get along," Bertie was saying, encouragingly. "It is only a plain quadrille, and having Mrs. Woodham opposite will make it easier. Then we are only

sides, so you can begin to feel at home before your turn comes."

He felt the hand tremble upon his arm. Bertie Collins was used to society girls, whose pulses rarely responded to emotion, or rather they seldom experienced the emotion itself. Amy went through the first figure stiffly, but with success, and improved a little with every one.

It was delightful, and her eyes grew bright, her prim Brown mouth relaxed from its "prunes and prisms," and when she smiled her whole face seemed to soften.

"I don't believe I shall ever be afraid again," she said, as the quadrille was ended and they fell into a march. "You were so good, Mr. Collins."

"Don't speak of such a trifle. You will soon get into practice."

Mrs. Woodham joined them, taking Bertie's other arm. They promenaded, chatting agreeably, while the dancers were occupied with a polka.

Then another quadrille. Bertie was engaged for this. He cast about and saw Charley Oates coming toward them.

"Would you like to dance this, Miss Brown? Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Oates. I am engaged, but I'll get as near you as possible, and somewhere along the evening we'll have another. Don't get nervous," with an encouraging smile.

Charley Oates was fat and good-natured. He took his place with Miss Brown, and as she could glance across at Mr. Collins, she kept up her courage.

"There!" laughed Fanny, as she floated around to Bertie again, "didn't I beard the lion in his den, or was it the seven wise owls in their nest? Oh, dear, aren't they prim and complacent and funny? but Amy is a real nice little thing. Not pretty, but with a face and a soul that has capabilities, if they are not smothered by that tremendous Brown self-complacency."

"They are a prim lot. Do you know that girl never danced with a gentleman before? Really, Fanny, it gave me quite a sensation."

"Romantic youth, beware!"

"Well, it is odd to come across such an innocent body—who is not a downright idiot. But let us go and look for her. I've promised her a quadrille, and that dolt of a Charley Oates makes love to every feminine who comes in his way."

"Really," with a peculiar inflection.

I am afraid Amy had a spice of latent wickedness in her. She talked gaily, she laughed with a dainty recklessness that surprised her companion.

She had a presentiment that this was the last of her good time, and she would make the most of it.

Oh, how delightful it was to be like other folks! She would have a real party dress, something light and fluffy, made short for dancing; she meant to wear real flowers in her hair and at her throat, and illusion ruffs—and—

"Oh, dear, why does it end so soon?" she cried.

"You are just getting into the spirit of dancing, Miss Brown. Do you ever waltz? You'd like it immensely."

"Amy!"

Amy started guiltily, her cheeks in a flame.

"Do you know what time it is? Your mother has been waiting half an hour," said Aunt Henrietta, in a voice that pointed out the enormity of her sin. "Come at once."

"Allow me to escort you both—"

"Thank you, no, Mr. Collins," in a decisive tone. "As a family, we are used to regular hours. It is this that brings summer resorts into disrepute, turning night into day for dissipation. Good-night," and she bowed stiffly.

He wanted to laugh. Amy saw it, and her cheeks flamed, but not with anger against him, as Browns cheeks should have done. She followed her aunt with an indignant step.

Amy gave a backward, regretful look at the pleasure she was leaving.

They reached home, shut and locked the doors.

"Amy!" exclaimed her aunt.

"Amy!" ejaculated Sarah.

"Amy!" re-echoed Caroline.

"I had no idea a Brown could so demean herself!" in severely-virtuous indignation.

"Mixing with people you know nothing about. As if you had no family pride."

"And dancing with a gentleman on so short an acquaintance!"

"And your poor mother ready to drop with fatigue!"

"And that Mrs. Woodham is no fit companion for a young girl. To think of her allowing that man to wait upon her, dance with her, and escort her everywhere, and he not her husband! To be staying at the same hotel with him!"

Amy could stand it no longer, though the three women had uttered their comments so rapidly she could not have slipped in a word before.

"She has always lived in the house with him, for his father was her guardian, and her husband is own cousin to him—Mr. Collins, I mean. He is just like a brother."

"Amy, you know nothing about society."

"And I never shall know if we sit in a row against the wall, never speaking, never even crossing the floor, never knowing anybody, never having any good times. We are just a bundle of negatives, and I know it looks queer to other people. I hate it—yes, I do! What is life worth, if you are never to have any pleasure?" and Amy stamped her foot.

"Amy!" said the three voices, in solemn warning chorus. "And you a Brown!"

"I wish I wasn't—there!"

"This is the result of associating with such people. Amy, I am ashamed of you!" said Aunt Henrietta, sternly. "The idea of actually thrusting yourself in the way of a mercenary, fortune-hunting person."

"I didn't thrust myself in his way. And how do you know he is mercenary or a fortune-hunter? At least no one has hunted us very much as yet," and Amy laughed recklessly. "Even our fortunes have not—done much for us."

"Amy, you had better retire to your room at once. I am amazed to find you so insolent, so disrespectful, so lost to all sense of what is proper and befitting."

"Good-night, then," and Amy flounced out, slamming the door behind her. Then she tore off her cumbersome silk dress, her jewellery massive enough for a dowager, and hurried into bed, that she might have a little cry to herself.

The music floated up through the open window. She could see the mazes of the dance, the fluttering, diaphanous robes, the bright faces of youth and happiness. Must she be shut out of it because she was a Brown and an heiress?

Some ray of good sense had pierced Amy's heart, filling it with a certainty that the world was not as much taken up with the Browns as they were themselves.

Amy fell asleep before the women in the next room finished their confab, and dreamed that she waltzed with Mr. Collins in a dress of soft white with pale blue ribbons.

There was something in his eyes that made her nerves quiver and her heart beat tumultuously. It was a sweet dream, and she blushed over it after she awoke.

They were all cold and formal to Amy the next morning. After breakfast Amy slipped out and walked down to the rugged and rocky shore. On the beach there were carriages and groups of aimless, happy ramblers. Could she tell Mr. Collins? she wondered.

She went climbing over the rock and gathered two or three little wildflowers. Then she found a pretty nook, and sat down to read a book she spied lying on the rock.

Page after page she turned, so engrossed that she did not hear a footstep, that of Bertie Collins, who now and then hid himself away in this secluded nook.

Amy's hat had been pushed back in her earnestness until it hung about her neck, and her hair was roughened out of its immaculate order by the breeze.

"Oh, how beautiful it is!" she cried, at length, closing the book and half turning.

"I am glad you like it," said Mr. Collins.

"When did you come here?" asked Amy, with flaming cheeks and her eyes that certainly were not angrily lighted.

"I have been watching you for about half an hour," with an amused smile. "How did you come to find my particular den?"

"Is it yours? I am sorry I have intruded."

"I will pardon you on one condition—that you come here whenever you feel inclined. And if I had another volume that I was sure would interest you as much, I should be tempted to leave it about."

He came and sat down beside her, and idly turning the leaves, read snatches here and there.

The forgot all about time. Amy returned shamefully late, and had some supper sent up to her room.

Aunt Henrietta came up with a sudden and severe attack of neuralgia, and Sarah, summoning a maid, went through a process of hot remedies. Amy dressed herself and coaxed her mother to go downstairs for an hour.

Mrs. Woodham found them, and brought a friend or two to introduce. Amy had a wickedly lovely evening, dancing. She even essayed a waltz with Mr. Collins, and laughed gaily at her own blunders. How very, very happy she was!

Aunt Henrietta had considerable fever the next day. Amy was summarily dismissed by the girls—she was only a bother in the sick-room.

They went out to drive, and she actually persuaded her mother to invite a Miss Moore and a Miss Austen, and the girls accepted graciously. She learned from Miss Moore that at the next little town there was a very stylish dressmaker, who would send to the city for anything one wanted. That very afternoon Amy went over and ordered two dresses, a white and a cream with light blue trimmings.

"But what will your Aunt Henrietta say?" wailed her mother.

If the dresses could only come, and if Amy could only wear them before her aunt was able to get about. She was making rapid strides in emancipating herself, in "being like other people" as she put it.

"For it seems to me, mother," said sensible Amy, "that we have been carrying round this cumbersome Brown respectability and dignity until we think of nothing else. And there are so many nice people in the world. Sarah and Carry don't seem to mind, but I do like pleasure and happiness. Am I very frivolous?"

Mrs. Brown looked up helplessly, and said, in a mild, deprecating tone:

"I hope you will not do anything wrong;" whereat Amy laughed merrily.

Mrs. Woodham and she became very good friends. By little bits she heard most of Bertie's history.

The Collins's had been very wealthy, but a few years before this a misfortune had overtaken them.

Bertie, being the only available son, had given up his dreams of art and taken a lucrative position, that his parents might not feel too keenly the change in their declining years.

"So you cannot wonder that I admire and respect him," said Mrs. Woodham, warmly. "All the boys were like brothers to me, but Mr. Woodham and I have an especial fondness for Bertie. And now Frank has a suit in hand by which he hopes to recover about two thousand pounds for Mr. Collins. Perhaps if it succeeds Bertie may feel free to go abroad and pursue his studies."

Amy Brown looked at him with different eyes. She had admired him before; now, foolish girl, she felt like falling down and worshipping him.

Here was all her money, the hundreds that

she could not spend and were being added every year to her principal.

Oh, if she might do something with it to help him. Of his marrying her she never thought. His life appeared so much grander and higher than hers.

But Mrs. Woodham had, and one day she broached it to Bertie.

"I took her up just for fun," said she, "just to make all those staid, eminently respectable people stare, and how amazed they were that first night I whisked off Amy. But she is such a good, sensible little creature. I like her now for herself. And, Bertie, you would be doing a really kind act by marrying her. You would give her a bright, happy, busy life. Her sisters will never marry, and so, with all her money, men will fight rather shy of her."

Bertie flushed hotly.

"Fanny," he cried, "do you think that meanly of me? To deliberately set about marrying a woman for her money!"

"No; I want you to like her, to love her, to think how happy you could make her, to take her travelling and cultivate her, and in the end I know you would both be real happy. Look at it in a sensible point of view. If you were rich and wanted to marry a poor girl—"

"But that would be so different. It is a man's place to provide. No, I don't believe I could if I loved her, and I do not love her, although she interests me—"

"She's not pretty, I know," interrupted Fanny, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, she has good, clear, honest eyes. You see she is not statuesque nor Madonna-like, so her plain bands of hair are not striking. By the way, do you believe that is all her own? I'd like to see those great braids down."

Fanny smiled to herself. He should see the hair down some day, and it should be creped to his fancy.

"Oh, Bertie!" she cried, with a sudden thought, "suppose we were to take her to the Assembly Rooms? Maybe she might go, now that her aunt is sick. And next week I am to meet Frank and go to Liverpool with him, you know, and the poor thing will have to fall back upon the edge of Brown dignity. I mean to ask her. If she only had a decent dress to wear!"

"Yes; those hot, over-trimmed silks are dreadful for a summer night."

"I think I can manage it. I am going to find her now."

Fanny found her sitting on the balcony in quite a fever. Her box of dresses would come by the one o'clock express. She opened her heart to Mrs. Woodham, and begged to be advised.

Fanny gave a glad little laugh, and clapped her hands. Could anything have happened more opportune? Then she unfolded her plan about the dance.

"But Sarah or Carry would be sure to go," said Amy, despondingly. "Don't think I am unsisterly, please Mrs. Woodham, but I can't make them understand—and we never go out alone."

"Well, send your dress to my room, and come in this afternoon to try it on. I think I can manage it"—and she gave a cunning laugh.

The Brown family believed devoutly in an after-dinner rest. So while the family went to bed Amy stole down to Mrs. Woodham's room. The box was opened in a trice. Simple-minded Amy was left with delight.

"This cream and blue is exquisite. Now I shouldn't think of choosing cream for you, and you could not wear it without the blue trimmings. It is wonderfully becoming. You have some good taste."

"Aunt and the girls get whatever colour is fashionable. We don't any of us spend our income, and why should we go on saving it up? Why, Sarah has £25,000. I'd like to spend a little foolishly."

"This is spent wisely, I think. Now, to-morrow, at four, I am going to take you out in a carriage, to do a little shopping with me. We will go to the house of a friend, and at eight you

will telegraph home that you have been persuaded to go to a dance with me, and I will add that I promise to bring you home safely."

Amy consented. She was very quiet that evening and the next morning. Aunt Henrietta thought she would venture downstairs that evening. She was thin and shallow, and Amy looked at her with a strange pity. Would she put on her sage-green silk? she wondered.

The plan worked to perfection. Sarah was satisfied when she found that Mr. Collins was not to escort them.

"You ought to be more discreet, Amy," she said, gravely. "You know that Mr. Collins would be no match for one of us."

"I don't think he wants to marry one of us," said Amy, simply.

They had a little supper, and went to a hair-dresser's, where Amy was braided and puffed and creped, and brought back to seventeen. Indeed, she hardly knew herself.

"I did not think I could be made to look so well—so much like other people," she said, with innocent pride.

Bertie Collins positively stared at Amy Brown. Why, she was young and pretty. A little change in dress had worked a marvellous transformation.

His look of admiration gave her sufficient courage to surmount the strangeness, the idea of being in borrowed plumes, and they proceeded to the ball-room.

It seemed to Amy that she never knew what delight was until that evening. She danced and danced, she talked and laughed, she promenaded the long room with the buoyant step of girlhood. Indeed, she had never been sixteen until that night.

Sarah and Carry were sitting up for her. Aunt Henrietta had not succumbed until midnight, so her sermon was saved until morning.

"See here," said Amy, when both girls had opened upon her with all the Brown severity and amazement. "I am a woman grown, and in the lawful possession of my fortune. I am old enough to buy a dress or decide upon an amusement without all this fuss. I shall not interfere with your ways, and all I ask is to have mine now and then, so long as I am doing nothing the world regards as being reprehensible, and now I shall go to bed. Good-night."

Bertie Collins went back to his office to work off the idle dreams of the past three weeks. But after a while he found out, to his own amazement, that he was really in love with Amy.

The lawsuit was won, and an old debt of two thousand pounds paid his father. Fanny and her husband were coming back to spend the next year with the old people, and he was at liberty to take up his bygone dreams.

The new one first. He went straight to Brownsville, wondering how he was to face all the Brown women; but he met Amy first—saddened Amy—out for a long walk this dull November day.

"Oh!" she cried, in joyful surprise, "Mr. Collins!"

Bertie gathered her in his arms and kissed the cold face, telling his story rapidly, passionately. He laid aside all pride.

If she would take him—if she would go abroad with him—

After a storm of opposition it was settled. The wedding was stiff and formal and cumbrous, as became a Brown.

Amy gave in to everything. To have Bertie was sufficient happiness for her.

There are some people who wonder why an artist like Mr. Collins did not choose a beauty for his wife; but he, foolish fellow, thinks Amy, well-dressed, accomplished and refined, is a beautiful woman.

A. M. D.

grounds," and "as a Minister of the Gospel" in order that the sphere of missionary operations might be extended.]

"Shoot, burn, and hang"

—The Bishop sang—

"These pagans, till they utter loss spell.

But leave me one,

And when you've done

I'll read him portions of our Gospel."

—Funny Folks.

ATE-TAITY.

THE new F. O. rule, by which diplomatists are to retire at seventy, can scarcely be traced to any direct intervention of the goddess Atë. (Eighty?)

—Funny Folks.

EPPE'S SOLUBLE COCOA.

Is he? Then he'll soon get into hot water.

—Funny Folks.

Good Variation on Popular Song—"Where was Buchanan when the Light went out?"

—Funny Folks.

UNFINISHED HOMICIDES.

THE "lady killer," the man who "kills Time," and the one who "murders the Queen's English."

—Funny Folks.

THE CLERICAL CO-OPERATIVE STORES.

WELL may overburdened traders
Sow! at ever-fresh invaders,
While their customers are dwindling more
and more;

For besides the Civil Service

The new rival they observe is

The Clerical Co-operative Store.

For beyond tract, sermon, homily,

Fit for any "serious family"

They will offer "prime Bones at two-and-four,"

And with chosen Scriptural pas-

sages,

Turkeys, fowls, geese, ham, and

sausages,

At the Clerical Co-operative Store.

'Twill be pleasant if we may go

To a vicar for our sago,

While a verger brings our parcels to the door;

Or a bishop takes our money

For soap, soda, rice, and honey,

At the Clerical Co-operative Store.

And if those who're prone to utter

Naughty words against their but-

ter,

Will go upwards to the twenty-second floor,

They can have some fresh from Brit-

tany,

Which will make them, when they

eat any,

Bless the Clerical Co-operative Store.

The hoary-headed sexton

Will have shovels with a text on,

Bell-ringers will have new ropes by the score,

And the motto for the people

Be the "Counter and the Steeple,"

And the Clerical Co-operative Store.

—Funny Folks.

SOMEWHERE ELSE.

A man passing through a gateway in the dark ran against a post.

"I wish that post was in the lower regions," was his angry remark."

"Better wish it was somewhere else," said a bystander. "You might run against it again, you know."

THE FORCE OF A GREAT EXAMPLE.

AMONG the notices given in the House of Commons the first night of the Session was one "To introduce a Bill for the improvement of Spirits in bond."

Does this point to further "rectification?"

—Punch.

FACETIE.

A HOLY ASPIRATION.

[The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol voted with our beligerent Ministry "on religious

ONE of the Effects of our Indian Policy—To convert Shere Alis into sheer enemies.

—Punch.

PROPER Decoration for a "Blocked" Law Court—Bar-relief.

—Punch.

PARADOXICAL.

ETHEL: "It was a most wonderful performance, Aunt Tabitha. First, she was shot out of a cannon's mouth on to a trapeze fifteen yards above the orchestra, and then she swung herself up till she stood on a rope on one leg at least a hundred and twenty feet over our heads!"

AUNT TABITHA: "Ah! I always think a woman lowers herself when she does that!"

—Punch.

WAR RUMOURS.

THAT the First Lord of the Admiralty daily experiments with nitro-glycerine rockets in his back garden.

That the military-looking check-takers at the Alhambra are called out with the reserves.

That the Lord Mayor has ordered his Sword-bearer to have his weapon ground without delay.

That the bears at the "Zoo" are to be kept under lock and key, lest popular indignation may be unduly excited.

That candidates for the Civil Service are to be examined in Russian topography.

That the London Shoeblack Brigade is to be reorganised and placed on a war-footing.

That a bicycle corps of commissioners will be established.

That the Alexandra and Crystal Palaces will be purchased by the Government for barracks.

That the Aquarium at Westminster will be used as a small-arm manufactory.

That the Beefeaters of the Tower are to be mobilised.

—Funny Folks.

THE PATRIOTIC SONG-WRITER'S STOCK-IN-TRADE.

A BUSHEL of "bounce."

Eighty yards of "Lion's tail," of the description which cannot bear being trodden upon.

A hundred Bears who have been licked.

The same number of Bears who will be licked.

A bale of Union Jacks.

Timber for the construction of any number of "Posts."

"British Tara" and "Hearts of Oak" ad lib.

Five hundred "gallant Turks."

A few Empires in the East.

Fifty sneers at Gladstone.

A thousand pats on the back for Beaconsfield.

Seventy unhaveable Constantinoples.

Several good sound Osman Pashas, and one or two Plevnas.

Britannia's guns.

Britannia's sons.

Britannia's puns.

These last, however, the patriotic song-writer only descends to when he is quite done-up with his efforts, and is pausing a moment to regain breath.

—Funny Folks.

LAY HELPERS.

ARTIFICIAL Incubators. —Funny Folks.

STATISTICS.

IN the whole world twenty years ago the steel production amounted to little more than 300,000 tons, at an average cost of about £30 a ton. Last year the production went beyond 2,200,000 tons, and its cost only showed an average of £12 a ton.

SINCE its foundation in 1795 the present Paris Mint has coined 1,700,000,000 gold pieces.

SEPARATIONS of married folk are becoming much more numerous yearly in France. In 1859 the applications for this practical divorce

were 1,080; in 1860 they had risen to 1,913; in 1865 to 2,395; in 1870 to 2,881; in 1876 to 3,251. Only 14 per cent. of the applications came from the husbands, and in 38 per cent. of the cases the parties were childless. In 21 of every 100 unions sought to be dissolved the marriages had lasted less than five years; in 23 from 5 years to 10; in 33 from 10 years to 20; and in the remaining 18 over 20 years.

AS THE SUN SHONE OUT.

A CHILD roamed, laughing, the brooklet's bank,
As the sun shone out, as the sun shone out,

A darling of joy, a sylph of girls,
With a laugh of music, and sun-bright curls,

While the spring-tide wind, with a jocund shout,
Romp'd down by the hill and romp'd up by the dale,

And the brook kept prattling its fairy-tale,
Which seemed, in the pauses, to say:

"Oh, laugh and be glad! for one lives not long;
Like a gathered rose, like a stifled song,

It passeth away, away!"

A maid strolled, longing, the river's marge,
As the sun rode high, as the sun rode high,

An idol of dreams, a queen of maids,
With a silvery smile, and long golden braids,

While the summer wind, with a pensive sigh,
Loitering out of the woods and the banks along,

And the river kept sighing its plaintive song,
Which seemed, in the pauses, to say:

"Oh, dream and be sweet! for one's hope is vain;
Like a cloud that forms and is gone again,

It passeth away, away!"

A woman roved, weeping, the ocean shore,
As the sun still shone, as the sun still shone—

A form of sorrow, a faded fair,
With wan, white visage, and wild-blown hair,

While the autumn wind, with an eerie moan,
Murmured over the sands, with sad wrecks strewn,

And the sea kept droning an ancient tune,
Which seemed, in the pauses, to say:

"Oh, weep and be sad! for one's joy is brief;
Like the fleeting foam, like the fading leaf,

It passeth away, away!"

She looked to land, and she looked to sea,
As the sun shone out, as the sun shone out,

But never again, in the world's strange stir,
Could her lost, lost lover come back to her;

And a storm wind, over the waves' mad rout,
Came flinging the spray, and whirling the gulls,

And her heart heard only amid the lulls
What seemed in despair to say:

"Oh, love and but lose; for one's love must fade;
Like the winds that rise and are then low laid,

It passeth away, away!" N. D. U.

THE Aberdeen pundit has married an incorrigible shrew, and now declares that he has contracted a dangerous scold.

GEMS.

MEN of solid learning never entirely lose their social importance. No one gives his admiration for nothing. Every human being must put up with the coldest civility who has neither the charms of youth nor the wisdom of age.

THE true hospitality of the home is never loudly demonstrative. It never overwhelms you with its greeting, though you have not a doubt of its perfect sincerity. Quietly it does its work, that it may put you in peaceable possession of its results.

TRUTH will never die; the stars will grow dim, the sun will pale his glory, but truth will be ever young. Integrity, uprightness, honesty, love, goodness, these are all imperishable. No grave can ever entomb these immortal principles.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MOths.—A very pleasant perfume, and also a preventive against moths, may be made of the following ingredients: Take of cloves, caraway seeds, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, and Tonquin beans, of each one ounce; then add as much Florentine orris-root as will equal the other ingredients put together. Grind the whole well to powder; and then put it in little bags, among your clothes, &c.

TO PICKLE WALNUTS.—Put the walnuts in salt and water for ten days, stopping the jar close with a linen cloth, so that the walnuts cannot rise above the water; then put them in vinegar for ten days. If the walnuts are exposed to the air, they will lose their colour. To one hundred walnuts, put half an ounce of mace, quarter ounce of cloves, quarter ounce of nutmegs, one hundred cloves of garlic, one and a half pints of mustard seed, a handful of horseradish, sliced, some bay salt, and one gallon of good vinegar. The vinegar should not be scalded. The walnuts should be young enough so as to be easily pierced with a pin.

BEEFSTEAK A LA MODE.—Cut the steaks in strips; put them in layers, in a dish; between each layer put bread crumbs, butter, pepper and salt. Bake for one-half hour, and when ready to serve, pour over them a rich gravy made of one pint of beef gravy, thickened with one tablespoon of butter, rolled in one tablespoon of browned flour, and serve. Spices can be added if agreeable to taste.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is said that Mr. Longfellow is writing a poem on the late Princess Alice.

It is regarded as a certainty in Berlin Court circles that Queen Victoria intends going to Germany this year. It is expected that after visiting the grave of the late Grand Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt, Her Majesty will go to Coburg, where she will make a longer stay.

HER Majesty will assume the guardianship of four of the children of the late Princess Alice.

PRINCE HENRY of the Netherlands was one of the wealthiest princes in Europe. His property has been usually estimated in Holland at 100,000,000 of gulden (£3,300,000).

THE marriage of the Duke of Connaught is definitely fixed for the 13th of March.

CARDINAL MANNING has left England for Rome. He visits Rome on the special invitation of Pope Leo XIII. to confer with him on matters relating to the organisation of the Catholic Church in England.

EVERY man is a miserable sinner in church, but out of church it is unsafe to say much about it, except to a small man.

It is quite a mistake to say, as so many of our public journals have done, that the military operations in Afghanistan are to be suspended until the spring, as the campaign is to be prosecuted to its natural conclusion.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SUNAN.—The man is liable to be charged at any time for theft. We advise him to take the expenses to the school-master. He may consider himself very fortunate to be dealt with so leniently.

T. A. H.—Bicycling is not a very healthful exercise, except for the very strong and hardy. Nothing like walking or riding on horseback.

SUBSCRIBER.—From your description of the blemishes on the face, we conclude they are small grubs, which you should gently but firmly squeeze out by the application of a handkerchief between the two thumb nails. To prevent fresh ones forming, scrub the face twice a day with soap and water and a flannel cloth.

G. E.—No charge whatever.

ALPHA.—For eruptive or skin complaints, we have heard of Lamplough's Pyretic Saline proving an effective remedy. It certainly assists the blood in recovering its lost saline constituents, and is thought highly of as a remedy in all kinds of fevers.

ALBANY.—If the young lady had a previous engagement with other persons it was her duty to keep it, and we do not detect any lack of breeding in what she said.

DOROTHY P.—Distrust your preferences, and make no manifestation of them hereafter until the lapse of a long time shall have thoroughly convinced you that they will be lasting.

LILLIE.—Decline to see the old bachelor when he calls. The other suitor appears to be in love with you. As long as you have no other trouble than his constantly telling you that you are pretty we think you will survive, even if we decline to suggest any way of preventing it.

NANCY L.—Your sister is entirely in the right, and it would be both unkind towards her and unwise for you to elope.

JONATHAN.—Plumbing and gasfitting is a trade a good workman at which commands very fair wages. In choosing between that and the grocery business the one is to be preferred for which you have the strongest natural inclination—whichever that may be.

ELLEN.—You do not state facts which show that your husband does not love you. It may be that you are in a morbid state of feeling on the subject. Cheer up, and do all you can to make him love you. The fault in such cases is not always on one side.

I. J.—Using pet names in letters is unobjectionable. A teacher, in signing reports or other papers pertaining to her employment, should write out her name in full—the Christian and surname—and if her name is Margaret she should sign any such document Margaret, and not Maggie.

SAMUEL.—You cannot learn the French pronunciation without a teacher, but if you are resolute in your purpose a teacher you can undoubtedly find. Different instructors prefer different elementary works. Procure such as the teacher you employ recommends.

HARRY SAYS: "At what period is, in your opinion, the proper time to present an engagement ring to a young lady? At the time of popping the question, or at the time of naming the wedding-day?" When you become engaged. It will show foresight if you have the ring in your pocket, all ready. If you happen to be rejected it will keep, and will serve some future occasion when you are more successful.

J. P.—Resolution and patience overcome almost all obstacles. If the lady's affections are not elsewhere bestowed it may be you can yet win them.

X. X.—It was rather imprudent. Such a practice is not to be commended.

CHOW-CHAM.—We make no charge. Thanks for expressions of approval.

BALEP.—We shall be greatly pleased to receive your communication.

SUEB.—The most approved method of promoting the growth of the eyelashes is to cut very carefully the tips (and only the tips) of the lashes. This is a difficult and delicate operation, and is best accomplished by someone cutting them when you are asleep. If too much be cut off the lashes will not grow at all, and very often sore and inflamed eyes result, as a consequence of their being deprived of their natural protection.

JORDAN.—To revive silt frames, beat up three ounces of white of egg with one ounce of chloride of potash or soda, then go over the frames with a camel's hair brush dipped in the mixture.

ROSE and NELLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men about twenty-one, good-looking. Rose is twenty, tall, fair. Nellie is eighteen, medium height.

F. W. S., J. J., and GONGER, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. F. W. S. is twenty-two, dark hair, brown eyes. J. J. is twenty-three, dark hair, brown eyes, fond of music and dancing. Gougey is twenty-four, fair, blue eyes, good-looking.

Z., twenty-five, fair, medium height, would like to correspond with a widow of a loving disposition with a view to matrimony.

EMILY, twenty-two, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age.

MARY M., a widow, forty, would like to correspond with a steady man between forty and fifty, and must be loving.

T. D. and A. A., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. T. D. is twenty-three, light hair, blue eyes, medium height. A. A. is twenty-one, tall, dark hair, blue eyes. They are seamen in the Royal Navy.

ORIGEN, forty, a clergyman, good-looking, dark, would like to correspond with a young lady between twenty-two and thirty. Respondent must be lady-like, domesticated, and loving.

FLORENCE and MAUD, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Florence is twenty, dark, Maud is twenty, thoroughly domesticated.

A. E. S., eighteen, fair, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady.

FLORENCE, MAUD, and ETHEL, three friends, wish to correspond with three gentlemen. Florence is loving, light hair, blue eyes, medium height. Maud is fond of music, tall, brown hair, blue eyes. Ethel has brown hair, hazel eyes.

HEAVEN'S GIFT.

Another little vessel
Launched upon life's sea
To sail the eventful voyage
Of Eternity;
Freighted with hope and promise,
Guarded by trident love,
We ask for its guidance
Of the kind heaven above.

Mother's love devoted
E'er shall round it be,
However it may wander
By distant shore or sea;
Father's true affection
E'er shall with it go,
Like a guardian angel,
Shielding it from woe.

Many prayers are offered
That its voyage may be
Prosperous and stormless
Over life's broad sea;
Many earnest wishes
Ask that it may win
The frail port of honour
Not the port of sin.

Heaven hath sent it to us—
Little heart, so frail!
We shall try to lead it
From the heavy gale;
We shall strive to lead it
Out on life's broad sea
Towards the fairest haven
Where smooth waters be.

So that when its voyage
It must end alone,
It shall keep right onward
In the course thus shown,
Till at last when over,
It has crossed life's sea,
It may reach the haven
Of life's eternity.

C. D.

DOROTHY, nineteen, tall, dark, wishes to correspond with a seaman.

NELLY and AMY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Nelly is twenty, brown hair, hazel eyes. Amy is nineteen, dark brown hair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

CARRY, twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children, tall, domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-four, dark, medium height.

TOM, twenty-two, dark, a seaman in the Royal Navy, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young lady about his own age, light brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, tall, fond of music.

ROSA and RONA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Rosa is twenty, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Rona is eighteen, tall, dark brown hair.

ARCHIE, eighteen, dark hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

G. L. and L. D., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. G. L. is twenty-three, medium height. L. D. is twenty, tall. Respondents must be fond of music and dancing, good-looking.

F. G. and D. A., two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. F. G. is twenty-four, good-tempered, of a loving disposition, fond of home. D. A. is twenty, medium height, fair.

ALICE W., dark eyes, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-four, dark, tall.

K. P., twenty-two, dark blue eyes, tall, fair, domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Must be twenty-four, dark hair and eyes.

SARAH and LILY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Sarah is twenty-five, medium height, of a loving disposition, fair, good-looking. Lily is twenty-one, good-tempered, dark, tall. Respondents must be between twenty-three and twenty-five.

K. M. and C. E., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. K. M. is twenty, brown hair, hazel eyes. C. E. is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes.

BLANCHE, twenty-three, fond of home and children, loving, golden hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-four, dark hair, brown eyes, good-looking, medium height, fond of home and children.

S. L. and N. A., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. S. L. is twenty-four, dark, handsome. N. A. is fair, blue eyes, good-tempered.

S. M. and H. H., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. S. M. is twenty-four, dark, fond of home and children, brown hair, blue eyes. H. H. is twenty-one, dark brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, medium height, loving. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-one.

CONSTANCE, of a loving disposition, and domesticated, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-eight.

RHODA, twenty-one, fair, auburn hair, grey eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, and fond of home, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age.

M. L. and H. A., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. M. L. is twenty-one, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, good-tempered. H. A. is seventeen, dark brown hair, blue eyes, medium height, of a loving disposition.

TOMMY, twenty-three, good-looking, fair, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a loving, fair young lady.

LIZIA T., twenty-five, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age, dark, domesticated.

HENRY, twenty-two, dark brown hair and eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Must be nineteen, fond of home and children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

GERTIE is responded to by—Fred.

CLARA L. by—Mac, twenty-three, medium height, and dark.

HAND & HEART by—Alice, seventeen, fair, good-tempered.

MAY by—A. V., twenty-two, dark, good-looking, fond of home.

MAUD by—Hett B.

A COUNTRY LASS by—Verenon, twenty-three, fond of home and music.

MARY by—Menotti, twenty-one, medium height, and dark.

C. F. by—C. D. L., twenty-one, light brown hair, grey eyes, dark.

DORA H.

BERTIE by—White Rose, twenty-one, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

POLLY by—R. A., twenty, good-looking.

ROSA by—Gardener, twenty-five, tall, fond of home, fair.

GEORGE by—Nellie, dark, fond of home and children, tall.

ROSE by—George B.

W. A. E. by—Alice, twenty-one, dark, fond of home.

G. M. by—Edith, twenty, medium height, hazel eyes, handsome.

TOM by—Helen, twenty-two, auburn hair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, medium height, good-looking, fond of home.

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